



If you have discovered material in AURA which is unlawful e.g. breaches copyright, (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please read our [Takedown Policy](#) and [contact the service](#) immediately

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE ROAD PASSENGER
TRANSPORT INDUSTRY
- A POLITICAL-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

VOLUME ONE

SIMON KENETH OWEN READ

Doctor of Philosophy

THE UNIVERSITY OF ASTON IN BIRMINGHAM

January 1989

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright rests with the author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without the author's prior, written consent.

Thesis Summary

THE UNIVERSITY OF ASTON IN BIRMINGHAM

"INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN THE ROAD PASSENGER TRANSPORT
INDUSTRY: A POLITICAL-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS."

READ, SIMON KENNETH OWEN - Submission for PhD - 1989

This thesis examines the British Bus and Tram Industry from 1889 to 1989, with special emphasis on the years 1940-1970. It provides a historical labour process analysis of a state-owned, service industry.

The first determinant of the pattern of industrial relations is the development of the labour-process. The labour process changed with the introduction of new technology (electrified trams and mechanised buses), the concentration and centralisation of ownership, the decline of competition, changing market position, municipal and state regulation, ownership and control. The tram industry, as a consequence of electrification, is almost wholly municipally owned and the history of the labour process from horse-trams to the decline of the industry is examined. The bus industry has a less unified structure and is examined by sector; London, Municipal, and Territorial/Provincial. The small independent sector is largely ignored. The labour process is examined from the horse-bus to the present day, but special emphasis is placed on the impact of nationalisation and the relationship between nationalisation and industrial decline.

The development of resistance in the labour process is discussed both as a theoretical problematic (the 'Braverman Debate') and through the process of unionisation, the centralisation and bureaucratisation of the unions, the development of national bargaining structures (National Joint Industrial Council and the National Council for the Omnibus Industry), and the development of resistance to those processes. This resistance takes either a syndicalist form, or under Communist Party leadership the form of rank and file movements, or simply unofficial organisations of branch officials. The process of centralisation of the unions, bureaucratisation and the institutionalisation of bargaining and the relationship between this process and the role of the Unions in the Labour Party is examined.

In theoretical terms, this thesis considers the debates around the notion of 'labour process', the relationship between labour process and labour politics and between labour process and labour history.

KEY WORDS: LABOUR PROCESS, ROAD PASSENGER TRANSPORT, BUS/TRAM HISTORY, LABOUR HISTORY, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS - ROAD PASSENGER TRANSPORT - BRITAIN.

DEDICATION :

To all members, past and present, of T.G.W.U. 3/111 Branch,
Bristol (City) Buses and most of all to Jackie.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the following. Professor Ray Loveridge for being a patient, helpful and tolerant supervisor. Mr. Regan Scott of the T.G.W.U. for allowing me access to the files of the T.G.W.U., Mr. Richard Storey and Mr. Alistair Tough, Librarians at the Modern Records Centre, Warwick University. The staff, especially at Aston University Library for their advice and assistance, and also Library staff at Birmingham University, Birmingham Central Reference Library and the British Newspaper Library at Colindale. The following also discussed matters germane to the thesis in a helpful and friendly way; Mick Rowlinson, Jim Cheek, Richard Durrant and Paul Smith. Thanks are also due to Richard Hyman and Chris Smith, who in their role as Examiners gave me much useful criticism and advice.

LIST OF CONTENTS

VOLUME ONE	PAGE NUMBER
Chapter 1 : Introduction	11
Chapter 2 : Historical Method	21
Chapter 3 : The Labour Process and Labour Politics	38
1 : The Labour Process	40
1a : The Absence of Human Agency in Braverman Considered	46
1b : Marx, Braverman and his Critics	51
1c : Is Skill Necessary for Control over the Labour Process?	58
1d : Control in Road Passenger Transport	60
1e : The Development of Managerial Control over the Labour Process	67
1f : The Impact of State Regulation, Control and Ownership on the Labour Process	72
2 : Mediation in the Labour Process	76
2a : Trade Unions as Contradictory Organisations	80
2b : The Bureaucratisation of the T.G.W.U.	85
2c : In Defence of Rank and File Explanations	89
2d : The Measurement of Rank and File Militancy	93
2e : Trade Unions and Politics	95
Chapter 4 : The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry	106
1 : The Development of Electric Tramways	108
1a : The Problems of Mechanisation	109
1b : The Obstacles to Electrification	111
1c : Electrification and Municipalisation	114
1d : The L.C.C. Tramways	116
1e : The Transformation of the Labour Process	118

List of Contents

VOLUME ONE...Chapter 4 continued...	PAGE NUMBER
2 : The Motor Bus in London	120
2a : Technical and Legal Problems	120
2b : From Competition to Monopoly in London	121
2c : The Transformation of the Labour Process	124
3 : State Intervention in Road Passenger Transport	127
3a : The Financial Crisis of the Tramway Industry	127
3b : Tram and Bus Competition in London	129
3c : The Growth of State Regulation : The 1930 Road Traffic Act	133
3d : The London Passenger Transport Board	138
4 : The Provincial Bus Industry	142
4a : The Structure of the Provincial Bus Industry	142
4b : The Restructuring of the Industry	142
4c : Restructuring Under Monopoly Control	149
4d : The Growth of Professional Management and Changes in the Labour Process	151
4e : Scientific Management of the Labour Process	154
Conclusion	156
Chapter 5 : Fifty Years of Transport Trade Unionism	175
1 : Types of Unionism	176
1a : Tramway Trade Unionism	176
1b : The First Years of the L.P.U.	183
2 : Amalgamation and Bureaucratisation	194
2a : Federation or Amalgamation?	194
2b : The Amalgamation of the L.P.U. and A.A.T.	197
2c : The United Vehicle Workers' Union	200
2d : One Big Union	209
2e : The 1924 Strike and Provincial Bus Workers	214
3 : The T.G.W.U. in Retreat and Recovery	218
3a : The General Strike	218
3b : Strikes and Unionisation in the Provincial Sector	224
3c : The London Busmen's Rank and File Movement	237
Conclusion	250

List of Contents

VOLUME TWO	PAGE NUMBER
Chapter 6 : Nationalisation	4
1 : The Consolidation of National Bargaining	6
1a : National Bargaining in Wartime	7
1b : The Progress of National Bargaining	10
1c : Strikes and Garage Resistance in Wartime	14
1d : The Final Consolidation of National Bargaining	20
2 : Nationalisation	32
2a : Nationalisation in Theory	33
2b : Nationalisation in Practice	39
2c : The Attack on Militancy	43
Conclusion	48
Chapter 7 : The Economics of Nationalisation	65
1a : The Replacement of Public by Private Transport	67
1b : The Problem of Productivity Measurement	69
1c : The Financial Crisis of the B.T.C.	73
1d : The Response of the Nationalised Bus Industry to Declining Market Position	76
1e : Labour Problems in the Bus Industry	83
Conclusion	86
Chapter 8 : Industrial Relations in the Bus Industry : 1950-1964	91
1 : London Busworkers and 'The Platform': 1950-5	93
2 : Bus Workers and Racism	102
3 : The 1957 Provincial Strike	112
4 : The 1958 London Strike and After	117
Conclusion	140

List of Contents

VOLUME TWO	PAGE NUMBER
Chapter 9 : The Restructuring of the Industry	154
1 : Productivity and the N.B.P.I.	157
2 : The Reorganisation of the Industry	168
3 : The Growth of Operational Research	172
4 : Labour Militancy and the Crisis in Industrial Relations	177
5 : The T.G.W.U. and the Labour Government	191
Conclusion	199
Chapter 10 : The Failure of Restructuring and Other Strategies	207
1 : The Continuing Decline of the Industry	209
1a : Continuing Economic Decline	210
1b : The Pattern of Militancy in the Bus Industry in the 1970's	225
2 : The Social Contract and Municipal Socialism	230
3 : The Thatcher Years : The Final Crisis?	236
Conclusion	244
Bibliography	251

LIST OF TABLES AND DIAGRAMS

TABLES :	PAGE NUMBER
VOLUME ONE	
Table 1 : Operating Costs of Different Midlands Tram Systems	113
Table 2 : Tramway Systems and Types of Ownership	115
Table 3 : Passenger Journeys on London Trams/Buses in Millions	117
Table 4 : The Composition of the London Bus Fleet : 1904 to 1912	121
Table 5 : Passenger Journeys in London by Different Carriers Compared to L.C.C. Finances	131
Table 6 : Control of Largest Territorial Companies	146
Table 7 : Operating Statistics for the B.E.T. Group : 1919-1939	148
Table 8 : Proportion of Acquisitions Before and After the 1930 Road Traffic Act	149
Table 9 : Professional Background of a Selection of Managers Active in the Bus Industry 1920's	152
Table 10 : Membership of the Amalgamated Association of Tramway & Vehicle Workers : 1889-1910	178
Table 11 : Membership of the Road Passenger Transport Group of the T.G.W.U. by Area : 1922-1926	215
Table 12 : Membership of the T.G.W.U. Road Passenger Trade Group and Employment in the Industry: 1926-1932	224
Table 13 : Date of First Major Union Agreement After 1926 in the Largest Territorial Companies in order of Fleet Size in 1939	227
VOLUME TWO	
Table 14 : Fleet Size of Each Group of Operators : 1937-55	6
Table 15 : Major Strikes in the Bus Industry 1943-5	17
Table 16 : Major Strikes in the Bus Industry 1945-8	21
Table 17 : Indices for Production, Productivity, Prices and Profits for the Nationalised Bus Industry 1948-62	70
Table 18 : B.T.C. Finances : 1948-1962	74

List of Tables and Diagrams

VOLUME TWO

PAGE NUMBER

Table 19 : The Relationship Between Revenue, Operating Costs and Wages for Tillings and Scottish : 1948-62	78
Table 20 : Passenger Carryings in the Nationalised Passenger Transport Industry : 1948-1961	80
Table 21 : The Relationship Between revenue, Operating Costs and Wages for London Transport Buses : 1948-62	82
Table 22 : Staff Turnover of Male and Female Drivers and Conductors on Tillings and Scottish Buses : 1951-62	84
Table 23 : Staff Shortages on London Transport : 1954 - 1963	84
Table 24 : Comparison of Militancy and Sales of 'The Platform' at all London Transport Garages : 1954-63	126
Table 25 : Employment, Basic and Average Earnings and Hours in the Bus Industry 1965/6	158
Table 26 : Existing O.M.O. Bonus Agreements in Different Sectors of the Industry in 1966	163
Table 27 : U.K. Bus Fleet by Ownership : 1970	171
Table 28 : Strike Activity in Road Passenger Transport Compared with Other Industries	180
Table 29 : Strike Activity in the Road Passenger Transport Industry : 1960-70	184
Table 30 : N.B.C. Operating Statistics 1968-1986	211
Table 31 : Performance of P.T.E.'s 1970-1986	217
Table 32 : W.M.P.T.E. Statistics 1970-1986	219
Table 33 : Grants and Subsidies to the Bus Industry: 1972-1982	222
Table 34 : Strike Activity in the Bus Industry 1970-1980	226
Table 35 : Trends in Revenue Support by Type of Authority	234

DIAGRAMS :

VOLUME TWO

Diagram 1 : The Organisational Structure of N.B.C. 1969-72	214
--	-----

CHAPTER ONE : INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about industrial relations in the road passenger transport industry between 1889 and 1988 with special emphasis on the period of nationalisation. Industrial relations are considered within a wider framework of political-economy. In other words we examine not merely the institutional framework of industrial relations bargaining but the much wider question of how the industry developed and especially the history of the labour process in the industry. It is an attempt to explain why the industry developed in the way that it did and what that meant for those who worked for it. It is also about the way in which the hundreds of thousands of workers in this industry became conscious of their situation, reacted to it and tried to improve their circumstances. Lastly it concerns the way in which the organisations in which the majority of them put their faith failed to transform their situation. In short, it is about the politics of the labour process in one industry. A few preliminary points are necessary.

Firstly, this thesis is not a history of one section of the Transport and General Worker's Union. It is not a 'trade union' history along the lines of Philip Bagwell's excellent 'The Railwaymen'. Nor is it a history of the institutional arrangements through which industrial relations bargaining is practised, such as Hugh Clegg's authoritative study; 'Labour Relations in London Transport'¹. Nor is it a study of the kind which may be found on the shelves of the 'transport enthusiast'; a detailed bus company history containing lists of fleet numbers, routes, ticket types and other ephemera lovingly collected by the bus spotter brigade.

Books dealing with the industry tend to be trapped into

Introduction

certain grooves in much the same way as John Hibbs complained that many municipal bus operators planned their bus routes as if they were determined by the old tram rails long since removed. Thus we get numerous histories of bus companies, histories of the industry, histories of nationalisation, histories of the Labour Party and biographies of Transport Union General Secretaries. We get economic studies of service sector industries, economic studies of nationalised industries, detailed studies of bus operator efficiency, studies of government policy towards the nationalised industries and histories of transport policy. The list can be extended endlessly. The immediate point to note is the lack of cross-referencing between these different discrete areas of study. Despite the enormous amount of effort expended in describing each different aspect of it, our knowledge of industrial relations in road passenger transport is, as Hibbs observed, very slight². To quote an aphorism of Horace; 'A Mountain has laboured and bought forth a mouse!'³

The second point to note is the general lack of interest displayed in the men and women, as many as one third of a million at any one time, who spent their working lives driving, conducting or maintaining a vast fleet of trams, trolley-buses and omnibuses which fulfilled the transport needs of millions. Despite all this literature, who would know that uniforms were first issued in Glasgow because wages were so low that employees of the tram company, unable to afford decent working clothes, were taken to Court for public indecency? Or that in the 1920's major bus operators, were taken to Court for using child labour? Or that in the 1950's, when sociologists and political commentators first noted that workers were becoming 'affluent' that up to one third of bus workers in major cities were working continuous seven day weeks and that a working week of over seventy hours was the norm? None of these facts appear in the literature. Nor do facts concerning the way in which the industry was unionised, or the methods by which workers

Introduction

attempted to improve their wages and living conditions. Workers are treated as passive objects in the process of production, sometimes as positive impediments to the entrepreneurs and men of vision who 'built' the industry. Occasionally these workers go on strike and demonstrate their rather crucial role in the whole operation, most of these occasions are forgotten, sometimes those concerned are chastised for threatening to wreck the carefully constructed industrial relations machinery; fundamentally these attempts at resistance, we are reassured, achieve nothing. This thesis attempts to recreate the historical experience of those transport workers, not in terms of what they had to endure, but in terms of how they attempted to resist and change the terms of their exploitation.

These two points are related. In order to break down this isolation of different aspects of the picture we have to begin with a common thread which can unite these discrete aspects into a living unity. That common thread is the labour process. Only the labour process unites such diverse elements as; patterns of ownership and control, municipal ownership, state intervention and nationalisation, managerial strategy, bureaucratisation, technological development, patterns of industrial relations, unionisation, trade union politics and ultimately national politics, the nature of skill and control, and so on; into a totality. Only by focussing on the labour process can we attempt to discover, not a series of discrete, unrelated, contingent events but a historical process at work. The structure of the thesis reflects this concern. It is as follows.

Chapter Two describes the historical research methods employed and the main sources of information. It should be noted immediately that certain areas are much better documented than others and that there are some major areas of interest that have not been covered due to a failure to uncover sufficient information. For example, the employment of women during the Second World War is hardly touched on.

Introduction

Neither is the question of relations between black and white workers after the initial period of hostility. In themselves these questions could form the basis of further research.

Chapter Three examines some of the theoretical issues raised by contemporary sociological, labour history and industrial relations writings. These include the labour process, labour politics and labour history. Essentially the major theoretical concern is to attempt to connect two often discrete areas of theory; the labour process and industrial relations theory within a labour history. The theoretical issues raised are considered further below.

Chapters Four to Ten are historical chapters which examine different periods of the history of the bus industry, the labour process and the pattern of industrial relations. However, although the thesis covers the years 1889 to 1989, the bulk of the historical material is contained in four of the seven historical chapters, focussing on the years 1940 to 1970. The first two chapters consider the first fifty years in less detail as does the last chapter which examines the last nineteen years.

Chapter Four examines the development and structure of the tram and bus industry from 1889. The chapter considers major changes in the labour process, especially the electrification of trams and the mechanisation of buses. Critical to this process was municipal intervention and amalgamation which resulted in local monopoly control. There is also a discussion of the relationship between monopolisation and intensification of the labour process and also between monopoly and the growth of 'scientific', or at least more systematic, management. Finally the chapter considers the reasons for increasing state intervention in the industry in terms of ownership, regulation and control.

Chapter Five examines the history of bus and tram trades unionism. The main tram union, the Amalgamated Association

Introduction

of Tramwaymen, reflected the period of setbacks for general unionism after the victories of 1889. It was bureaucratic, non-militant, cautious and undemocratic and relied on the process of municipal reform for improvements. The first bus union, the London Passenger Union, by contrast, was a classic syndicalist union. There were continuous fights against bureaucratisation, it was extremely democratic and militant, and remarkably, was completely opposed to the first world war on internationalist grounds. The merger of the two unions into the United Vehicle Workers' Union, led to a major conflict between the two union traditions in which bureaucratisation was encouraged by the progressive emergence and consolidation of national bargaining, in the period after the war. This amalgamation then became part of the Transport and General Workers' Union. The chapter traces the lengthy process whereby the syndicalism of the London bus workers, and the remarkable militancy of their counterparts in the rapidly expanding provincial bus industry, was gradually brought under control by the leadership of the T.G.W.U. This culminated in the crushing of the Communist led London Busmen's Rank and File Movement in 1937 at the same time as the Union leadership repudiated a rank and file organised provincial busworkers strike.

Chapter Six examines the 1940's in which the greater part of the bus industry was nationalised and a complete system of national wage bargaining was consolidated. Nationalisation was remarkably ineffective in terms of changing the structure of the industry or implementing any of the alleged priorities of coordination, modernisation or increasing national 'efficiency'. Throughout the 1940's the bargaining position of labour improved, not as a result of nationalisation but of the unprecedented labour militancy which ran from 1943 to 1947 and effectively forced the employers to concede the right to negotiate over all manner of issues previously held to be managerial prerogative. Yet when it came to nationalisation, the leadership of the Union was more concerned to consolidate this apparent gain in

Introduction

control than to extend it. Consequently nationalisation offered few improvements in wages and working conditions by comparison with the private sector.

Chapter Seven examines the economics of the nationalised industry and the roots of economic decline of road passenger transport. Nationalisation served to lock the industry into a spiral of decline in which market share was conceded to private transport as a result of labour shortages, declining qualities of service and steadily increasing fares. Far from bringing major improvements in working conditions and wages, nationalisation served to hasten their relative decline.

Chapter Eight examines the pattern of labour relations in the 1950's through a series of case studies which examine the high level of spontaneous strike activity on London buses, the racist response to newly recruited black workers in the Midlands and Bristol, the 1957 provincial strike and the 1958 London bus strike. These studies illustrate the consequences of nationalisation on labour relations and provide a useful comparison between wage bargaining under the right-wing leadership of Deakin and the left-wing leadership of Cousins. They also serve to illuminate the question of how far leadership behaviour explains differences in union activity, suggesting that more importance should be given to the distinctions between trade union leadership and rank and file workers than to changes in union leadership itself.

Chapter Nine examines the major changes in the industry begun in the mid-1960's. The industry was substantially restructured under the Wilson government through the imposition of productivity agreements leading to the phasing out of conductors and the further development of scientific management. The nationalisation measures envisaged in 1947 were completed and the industry brought under almost complete state ownership. These major changes in the labour process placed national bargaining under enormous pressure

Introduction

as well as contributing to the rupture between the leadership of the Union and the Labour Party. Labour process restructuring also had contradictory effects on labour militancy which are examined in detail here.

Chapter Ten examines the failure of this restructuring to halt the process of decline and examines the reasons why labour militancy declined compared to other sections of the working class. This is followed by a discussion of alternative strategies followed since the mid-1970's. The first of these was the gradual realisation that public transport needed greater subsidy if it was to survive, this was one feature of the social contract but the policy was only fully realised at municipal level in the last years of the 1970's. The second strategy was to blame economic decline on state ownership and regulation which was progressively dismantled in the 1980's. Predictably this policy was disastrous for the industry and led to a mounting crisis in urban transportation which ultimately only has its solution in greater state intervention. The chapter considers the relationship between these strategies and labour militancy.

There are five areas in which, hopefully, this thesis makes some contribution to current debates if only in the sense of providing a further case study of a labour process analysis of a state-owned, service industry. The first concerns the connections between the labour process and labour history. It is extremely welcome that historians such as Richard Price have raised the question of the centrality of labour process analysis to labour history. Equally sociological debates around the labour process have gradually taken on a more historical character. Nevertheless the relationship between the two areas is difficult, particularly in evaluating the status of labour process analysis in labour history. Is it the central, determining relationship providing the main method of theorising the impact of structure on consciousness? Is it simply one of

Introduction

many different approaches which should be subject to comparative analysis? Or is it, in fact, a contingent but interesting contribution to the subject? Equally how important is history to an understanding of the labour process? Can the labour process be analysed historically? Or is history just a means to provide background and context to contemporary events?

The second area of debate concerns the impact of state legislation, regulation and ownership on the labour process. Labour process analysis has tended to avoid this area, particularly in industries in which the state has a major impact. Partly this is a reflection of the separation of politics as a particular area of study. Thus even within marxism, which is presumed to integrate these different approaches, theories of the state and theories of the labour process have rarely been merged.

The third area of debate concerns the nature of service work within marxist theory. It also has much wider contemporary significance in debates over the future of British social democracy. The history of passenger transport workers presented here demonstrates conclusively that there are no reasons inherent in the nature of service work which prevents unionisation, militancy or a strong identification by service workers with the working class as a whole, or the Labour Party. Here we have an example of a service, in a clear commodity form, in which the workers responded collectively and in very militant fashion, to the situation in which they found themselves. Yet the growth of the service sector is commonly held to spell the death, or at least decay, of social democracy. The 'New Times' and new fashions associated with the alleged post-fordist, or post-industrial world are in fact very old times indeed. Furthermore they are old-times associated with old-fashioned concepts such as industrial militancy and class consciousness.

Introduction

The fourth area of debate concerns the relationship between parallel processes. On the one hand the mechanisation of the labour process resulted in centralised control of mass production in a service industry. On the other hand, centralised control was paralleled by the growth of corporatist forms of bargaining. However the nature and meaning of corporatism is unclear. Not only is the term being progressively extended in contradictory fashion but it is by no means certain whether corporatism is simply another means of describing the ever closer interconnection of capital and the state.

The final contribution of this thesis is of great contemporary significance and is addressed in the conclusion. Privatisation and deregulation, underpinned by all sorts of assumptions about the dynamism of the market, will have important consequences for the industry, the labour process and the workers. But what precisely will these be? Taking a historical perspective, the conclusion will suggest some answers to this question.

Introduction - Notes

1. "The Railwaymen" - Philip S. Bagwell, Volume 1: George, Allen & Unwin, London, 1963. Volume 2: George, Allen & Unwin, London, 1982. "Labour Relations in London Transport" - Hugh Clegg, Blackwell, Oxford, 1950.
2. "The Bus Industry" - John Hibbs, J.M. Dent, London, 1975.
3. "The Art of Poetry" - Horace. Also translated rather less poetically as 'The mountain gave birth to a mouse'. The same can apparently be traced back to "The Banquet of the Learned" by Athanaeus.

CHAPTER TWO : HISTORICAL METHOD

This thesis can be classified as a work of historical sociology. Historical sociology is itself a problematic concept, the result in many cases of an 'arranged marriage', between two quite distinct traditions. History, or rather the tradition of British historical writing, brings into this marriage, a refusal to question methodological assumptions. Sociology, on the other hand, despite a close concern with methodology, displays a strong tendency towards ahistorical abstraction. This chapter will begin with a few comments on the problems of method in historical sociology. A general overview of the subject is impossible here, therefore the discussion will focus on two distinct areas germane to this thesis. The first is marxism and the second business history. It is interesting to compare the two since, despite starting from quite different premises and generally using quite different theoretical models, they end up confronting the same problems. The second part of this chapter will discuss the historical sources for this thesis. The final part will bring these two discussions together in a preliminary statement about the method of historical research employed here.

History itself is beset by a long tradition of empiricism, as Stedman-Jones has pointed out.¹ Empiricism is a disabling tradition. It means in practice, as Raphael Samuel, Editor of the History Workshop Journal, has pointed out, that historians see themselves;

"...first and foremost, as researchers, attentive listeners and close observers, guided by an imaginative sympathy with the past and an intuitive feel for its manuscript and material remains. Enquiry is framed in terms of the evidence available rather than the phenomenon to be explained, and the argument then proceeds by inference and illustrations. Interpretation, so far as possible, is embodied in the 'findings'.."2

Historical Method

Now this view of history, in which the 'findings' are a product of the interaction of the historian's skills and the evidence is quite misleading. In one recent business history, the writer even refers to his use of 'craft skills'³. History undoubtedly must have a relationship to empirical knowledge and interpretation needs to be related to the findings. Nevertheless this relationship is not determined by the empirical evidence, and the interpretation is not 'embodied' in the findings. It is a real relationship in which theory and empirical evidence interact. The suggestion that history is a process in which facts are allowed to speak for themselves closes off all discussion about the terms and criteria by which facts are selected, and the reasons for their non-selection.

Marx in a celebrated passage in 'Capital' wrote that;

"...what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realizes his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it. Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work."⁴

Every labour process is a result of purposive labour, even the writing of history. The purpose of that labour is not revealed by an analysis of the materials used, or the skills employed. All historians impress upon the empirical facts their own interpretation of events which reflects their own interests. History is not about the past speaking to us through the agency of the historian investigating the facts. History is the product of the present refracted through an interpretation of past events.

An example of how present concerns, which are by no means universal concerns, should inform the process of writing history, is given by one analysis of the use and abuse of

Historical Method

business history. Donald Coleman, suggests we should begin by agreement on some general and uncontroversial statements. He puts forwards three such statements. The first suggests that;

"..the performance of the British economy has been declining relative to that of its major competitors over the last hundred years; and it is desirable to reverse that trend..."⁵

This is a perfect illustration of the point. It may well be desirable to reverse the long-term trend of relative decline in the British economy, but the real question is how? An assumption that increased profits leading to higher investment favours everybody is certainly not uncontroversial. Indeed higher profits may entail increased inequality, increased unemployment, declining housing conditions for the poor, deteriorating health and safety at work and greater pollution. The statement assumes that the primary purpose of writing business history is to improve the relative economic performance of the British economy, measured in terms of improved profitability and an increase in wealth and power for the owners and controllers of the British economy. However such statements of intent should be welcomed, for they represent a step forward from the unquestioned assumptions implicit in most British historical writing. The statement also illustrates the way that present preoccupations, although in the case of relative economic decline this is no new preoccupation, structures the way in which the past is studied.

The history presented here is equally partisan. It is not simply concerned with describing the conditions and experiences of the hundreds of thousands of bus and tram workers. It examines specifically attempts by some of those workers to improve their conditions and to exert some control over the labour process in which they are subordinated. It discusses their successes and failures, the lessons drawn from these and the means by which these lessons are transmitted to others. It is also written in order to gain a historical perspective on the present.

Historical Method

This requires a theory which rises above the merely narrative. As Leslie Hannah, complaining of the absence of theory from business history, explains;

"..Business historians...Like their historical colleagues in other specialisms..remain inveterate empiricists, obsessed with setting the record straight, telling the story as it really was, but eschewing general theories. The result has been a range of impressive case studies...but such work rarely goes beyond the narrative method applied to the single case."⁶

In short, narrative precludes the construction of general theories. The case study far from providing illustration of a more general theory simply becomes one more specific case.⁷ Avoiding this problem is far from easy especially in an area where no narrative history exists. Cases can be chosen which illustrate a theory and cases which contradict such theory can be ignored. Narrative may preclude general theory, but true narrative also precludes dishonest history.

The key difference between history as narrative and historical sociology is the presence of theory, as a set of stated and explicit assumptions, as opposed to the absence of explicit theoretical considerations. This, by no means, solves the problem of the relationship between narrative and theory. From the perspective of a historian, in this case E.H. Carr;

"..Sociology at present faces two opposite dangers - the danger of becoming ultra-theoretical and the danger of becoming ultra-empirical. The first is the danger of losing itself in abstract and meaningless generalizations about society in general...This danger is brought nearer by those who assign to sociology the exclusive task of generalizing from the unique events recorded by history...The other danger is...of a sociology 'split into a series of discrete technical problems of social readjustment'...Sociology..must like history, must concern itself with the relation between the unique and the general. But it also must become dynamic - a study of...social change and development."⁸

E.H. Carr is here specifically attacking Popper and Parsons. But these twin dangers of ultra-theoreticism and

Historical Method

ultra-empiricism, in different forms, are present in marxist history as well. The debate between structuralism (read ultra-theoreticism) and subjectivist voluntarism (read ultra-empiricism) are ably represented in the well-known debate between Perry Anderson and Edward Thompson, which began in the 1960's and continues unresolved.⁹ A parallel debate raising the same theoretical issues concerning the nature of the state ensued between Ralph Miliband and Nicos Poulantzas, in which the latter taxed Miliband with the charge of abstracted empiricism.¹⁰

These are not just dangers inherent in marxist history and theory. Consider Hannah's complaint that;

"...There can be no doubt, however, of the disabling nature of much of the predominant neo-classical orthodoxy..for scholars investigating entrepreneurship. This has been a favourite refrain of economic historians since John Clapham (1922) attacked the Marshallians for their "empty economic boxes" and stimulated some heart searching about the implications of the shape of cost curves..."¹¹

Abstract theoreticization is as of doubtful value as an obsession with historical narrative, empiricism or 'the facts'. They are two sides of the same coin. Narrative and theory, or in marxist terms, the concrete and the abstract, must not be separated, but must constantly inform each other.

Without this permanent tension between the theoretical and the narrative, historical sociology, in common with many other forms of analysis in the social sciences, collapses either into a set of lifeless, abstract, ahistorical models or into a series of discrete narratives and unrelated case studies. In this context, Vic Allen's sustained attack on organization theory, is highly relevant.¹²

However, the purpose of this discussion is not to reach definite conclusions about the relationship between history and sociology. It is rather to situate the historical method used within this problematic. The central point made here is

Historical Method

that this method itself is directly related to the theoretical positions taken. These are discussed further in the next chapter. The historical chapters then attempt to illuminate this theory further with empirical detail taken from one industry. Thus the presentation of historical method here is not intended as justification of the method, for this can only be assessed in combination with the thesis as a whole. Let us begin with an examination of the empirical data provided by the historical sources.

This thesis relies almost entirely on printed sources. These can be divided into two groups; primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include trade union Annual and Biennial Reports, Conference and Special Delegate Conference Reports and other printed trade union records. It also includes trade union newspapers and journals, the major titles being 'The Licensed Vehicle Trades Record', 'The United Vehicle Workers Record' and 'The Record' produced by the Transport & General Worker's Union. The vast majority of these come from the Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen, the London & Provincial Licensed Passenger Worker's Union, the United Vehicle Worker's Union and the Transport & General Worker's Union. There are also extensive unofficial union publications, in the main rank and file newspapers such as 'The Busmen's Punch' and 'The Platform', but this category also includes a number of other publications as well as pamphlets, circular letters and in one instance, the minutes of an unofficial conference of provincial bus workers. Most of these come from various collections of material at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick, especially the T.G.W.U. collection, the Bill Jones File and the George Renshaw collection. Some information comes from the National Library of Scotland and the Mitchell Library in Glasgow.

Other primary sources of printed information come from Government Reports, Inquiries, Parliamentary Reports, Royal Commissions, and Labour Statistics. The Reports and

Historical Method

Inquiries are generally concerned with either labour disputes and/or arbitration and the regulation of motor traffic. The Parliamentary Reports generally cover periods of major legislation and nationalisation. Other information comes from quasi independent bodies such as the National Board for Prices and Incomes which issued a series of reports on the bus industry. Information is also taken from the Annual Reports and Accounts of the British Transport Commission, the Transport Holding Company, the National Bus Company and the Passenger Transport Executives. The main Government Labour statistics concern details of strike activity including the causes and outcome of disputes. This information produced by the Board of Trade, the Ministry of Labour and subsequently the Department of Employment provides valuable detail of strike activity, although there are some omissions. This information has been supplemented by details from national and local newspapers as appropriate. This information comes from the University Libraries of Aston, Birmingham and Warwick, Birmingham Reference Library and the British Newspaper Library.

Aside from the Annual Reports of transport undertakings, there are generally few primary employer's sources used in this thesis. This is to be regretted but is largely a result of three factors. Firstly the fragmented nature of the industry before the Second World War would have made locating and investigating these sources difficult. Secondly there exist numerous secondary sources, which whilst varying greatly in quality, provides a balance to the primary union sources. Lastly, too much attention to individual employers strategies would divert attention away from the main themes. There remains much research to be done on many different aspects of the industry and some good business histories to complement Barker & Robbins excellent work on London Transport would be more than welcome.

These primary sources were supplemented by extensive secondary sources, which can be divided into five main

Historical Method

groups. The works referred to here can be found in the bibliography. Firstly individual bus company histories. In general these provided little information relating to labour conditions, industrial relations or management strategies. The bulk of material usually refers to routes, vehicles and 'personalities' who are almost invariably 'pioneers', overwhelmingly they are written by enthusiasts. However some are much better than others, the best is undoubtedly Barker & Robbins history of London Transport which is a professional work of high quality and qualifies as a real business history. Also the work of Crosland-Taylor, manager of Crosville, which is largely biographical but provides a great deal of useful information, as do the reminiscences of Norman Dean of Hebble. British Electric Traction's two 'house histories', whilst obviously far from objective, also provide much useful information.

The second group contains histories of the bus and tram industry as well as more general transport histories. The work of John Hibbs and Charles Klapper is useful but often highly misleading. However both of these writers were essentially working in uncharted areas and any attempt at a comprehensive history must be welcomed. Economic histories of transport are much more common but tend to deal with the whole field of transport of which road passenger transport is obviously a comparatively specialised area. By far the most useful was Philip Bagwell's 'the Transport Revolution' mainly because the author has also written the definitive history of the Railway Unions and consequently paid much closer attention to working conditions.

The third group contains trade union histories. Philip Bagwell's two volume history of railway workers provides reasonable detail of the N.U.R. organised bus workers. However despite the fact that the T.G.W.U. has long been Britain's largest union, there exists no authoritative history of the Union. Dockers are covered by a number of writers including Wilson, but this does not amount to trade

Historical Method

union history. Most other sections of the union tend to be covered tangentially, such as engineers or chemical workers. In 1985, whilst this research was in progress, Ken Fuller's book on London bus workers appeared, however the book is disappointing, particularly in the coverage of the post-war period. The history of the trade union movement as a whole is covered in excellent detail but with little analysis by Clegg's two volumes which cover the period 1889-1933, Alan Hutt's book on the inter-war period is also useful. There is little work of this scope in the post-war period.

Consequently the most reliable means of drawing together the history of the T.G.W.U. are books which concentrate on the General Secretary. In contrast to the lack of a comprehensive Union history, there are some impressive biographies. The biographies which stand out are Alan Bullock's on Bevin and Geoffrey Goodman's on Cousins. Allen's study of Deakin's leadership is less impressive whilst Jack Jones' autobiography is extremely useful.

The final category of secondary sources covers political histories of the Independent Labour, Labour and Communist Parties. There are numerous works to choose from, Howell's book on the I.L.P. is extremely thorough while Coates provides the best overview of the Labour Party. There is no single authoritative work on the Communist Party and the Communist Party's own history is suspect. Thus for both the Labour Party and the Communist Party it is necessary to refer to a wide range of different works covering specific periods, which come from a wide range of political perspectives.

Having outlined the main primary and secondary sources, it remains to discuss the methods employed. This is the substance of the remainder of this chapter. The validity of the method rests primarily on the theoretical framework employed which is expanded elsewhere. The thesis examines

Historical Method

the development of the labour process in the bus and tram industry and the relationship between the labour process and labour militancy. The impact of changes in the labour process and labour militancy on labour politics were then examined.

The historical method begins by attempting to discover key periods of change in the labour process itself. This includes changes in technology, such as electrification and mechanisation, changes in work organisation such as the introduction of One Person Operation and changes in the nature of control over the labour process including the introduction of scientific management and developments in scheduling. This is by no means an exhaustive list.

Once key periods of change in the labour process had been established, the next stage was to search for evidence of changes in class consciousness among the labour force. Various different types of changes in consciousness were examined including; unionsiation, the formation of breakaway unions, militancy especially in the most visible form of strikes and the formation of unofficial organisations such as Vigilance Committees and the Rank and File Movement. Where changes in consciousness could not be matched up to previously discovered changes in the labour process, then the labour process was re-examined. The outbreak of militancy in the provincial sector in the mid-1930's was one such example. Here, after a more careful search of bus company histories, evidence for major change in the labour process was discovered. In other cases, the explanation for outbreaks of unionisation or militancy lay outside the industry in more general changes that were taking place. For example the Liverpool tramway strike of 1911 and the Leeds tramway strike of 1913 were clearly rooted in the general syndicalist labour unrest of the pre-war period.

Once the general framework of the relationship between changes in the labour process and changes in class

Historical Method

consciousness had been constructed, the next stage was to examine the impact of these changes on institutional arrangements for industrial relations bargaining and on union structure and from here to the more general pattern of labour politics. The establishment of both the National Joint Industrial Committee (N.J.I.C.) for the tramway industry and the National Council for the Omnibus Industry (N.C.O.I.) were both connected with an outbreak of labour militancy in these sectors of the industry. The development of these systems of bargaining and in particular the question of who exactly within the union structure was in favour of these systems could then be traced back through Union Conference Reports and other records, as could other the impact of other indications of militancy. Thus from here could be constructed a model of the relationship between the labour process, changes in class consciousness and the institutionalisation of bargaining and union structure.

Another source of important change in the industry was local and national state intervention, control and regulation and ownership. Since much of this was the result of actions by Labour politicians it was then possible to examine the impact that the whole complex of changes previously discussed had on this political process. Why, for example, did it take twenty years to set up the N.C.O.I. and why was it properly established in 1947 rather than the year it first met, 1940 and why was it not established in the early 1920's? Why did the Union never establish any measures of worker's control over the nationalised sections of the industry despite, in the 1930's, being exceptionally clear about the need to do just this? In other words, having established the basic framework in terms of changes in the labour process and the class consciousness of the workforce, it was possible to examine the relationship between these factors, union structure, the relationship between the Union and the Labour Party and Labour sponsored legislation in this light.

Historical Method

The historical method required the constant interaction of empirical facts and theory. Without the empirical research it was impossible to develop any but the most abstract theories. As the theory became more rooted in the historical detail it became possible to select areas of further enquiry which yielded a more accurate picture of events. This in turn provided a better grounding for the development of the theory and so on. Thus a central role in the methodology was the establishment of historical periodicity centred on what seemed to be key events. These events could then be examined from a wide range of different theoretical precepts and historical change in these different aspects provided more information clustered round these key events, or in some cases forced the rethinking of the relative importance of different events.

There were several problems with this method. The first concerns the location and availability of information. The second problem is the nature of the sources themselves. The third problem concerns the corroboration of evidence and the fourth problem lies in the conceptualisation of the theory.

The location of information is extremely difficult. It is all too easy to be gripped by the seeming importance of the highly visible. Thus parliamentary legislation always seems more important than it is because it is so well documented and easily available. Official trade union organisation always leaves more permanent remains than unofficial organisation. Even the rank and file organisations in London have left behind far more accessible information than other less established unofficial organisations. Information also tends to 'snowball', the more you know the easier it is to locate more information. The bibliographies of Harold Smith and Ian MacDougall proved helpful¹³.

Because of the problems of locating sufficient information, some topics have hardly been touched on. One example will suffice, the entry and exit of women from the

Historical Method

labour force during the 1940's is hardly mentioned, for the simple reason that I could discover no information on this subject. It is also likely that the unofficial movements in London have been given more importance than they deserve simply because archives containing their material exist. The information about strikes in wartime comes only from local newspapers, presumably because public transport is so highly visible, that denying the existence of a strike would be futile. Nevertheless, the quality of the information derived in this manner must be open to question.

This brings us to the second problem of the quality of the source material. Many of the sources can only be trusted provided that there is a clear understanding of how issues will be presented in them. For example, for most of its life 'The Record' is extremely unreliable. I well remember sitting in the canteen in Lawrence Hill Bus Depot in 1981 watching people read an account in 'The Record' of a strike which we had just been through. The politest way of expressing people's reaction to the article would be to say that they felt 'The Record' had been economical with the truth. Even the more 'objective' sources, such as the Ministry of Labour Gazette, relies almost totally on employer's reports of strikes, their causes and their outcome¹⁴. This thesis frequently quotes from the 'Daily Worker', not because it will necessarily be objective, but because the information they will look for in reporting a strike will frequently be more illuminating than the measured tones of 'The Times'. This brings us to the third point.

Corroboration of evidence is the most satisfactory method of proceeding. To compare an account of a strike in 'The Record', the official union paper, with 'The Busmen's Punch' the unofficial paper can be extremely revealing both in what they choose to report and what they choose to omit. Unfortunately corroboration is not always possible. Throughout the thesis I have been hopefully very careful in

Historical Method

referring to sources so as to allow of alternative interpretations which depend in the first place on theoretical presuppositions. However, with any research of this type, interpretations of events often depend on the amount of evidence available, and in many cases this has been based on a certain amount of assumption. For example, Crosville in the mid-1930's undoubtedly increased the average speed of each bus and the proportion of the working day of crews actually spent driving and conducting. There is no reason to suppose that this was not happening in all the territorial companies, yet there is remarkably little firm evidence that it was. To generalise about 97 different companies on the basis of direct evidence from three and circumstantial evidence from a few more seems a reasonable way to proceed but provides no absolute certainty.

The final problem concerns the elaboration of theoretical concepts. A particular example is the concept of class consciousness. Militancy may be one possible method of grounding this concept empirically, but militancy itself is an example of a difficult concept to utilise. Strikes are not always the result of militancy and militancy may not result in strikes, this depends on the relative strengths and weaknesses of the employers and the union. A very militant workforce may only need to threaten a strike to win their demands, and strike threats are not recorded in the same way as strikes. Indeed the interpretation of strikes has itself provoked quite a range of literature.¹⁴ Yet strikes are only one aspect of class consciousness. There is no simple answer to the problem of empirically grounding concepts which exist at a high level of theoretical generality.

These then are the main problems that can be identified at a methodological level. All of them, ultimately, rest on the validity of theoretical assumptions. There are undoubtedly skills associated with research methods alone, in abstraction from theory, and maybe historians prefer not

Historical Method

to discuss them as a means to maintain control over their own labour process. Nevertheless the strengths and weaknesses of this thesis largely rest on the ability of the theory to explain the dynamics of the history. The following Chapter introduces the major theoretical positions taken in this thesis.

Historical Method - Notes

1. "History: The Poverty of Empiricism" - Gareth Stedman Jones in "Ideology in Social Science" Edited by Robin Blackburn, Fontana, London, 1972. pp. 96-115. Quote p. 96. The argument is continued further in "From Historical Sociology to Theoretical History" - Gareth Stedman Jones in British Journal of Sociology, Volume 27, Number 3, September 1976. pp. 289-305. See also in the same edition of the B.J.S. "On History, Sociology and Historical Relevance" - E.P. Thompson.
2. "History and Theory" - Raphael Samuel, in "People's History and Socialist Theory" - Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981, p. xl.
3. "The Awakening Giant. Continuity and Change in I.C.I." - Andrew Pettigrew, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985.
4. "Capital: Volume 1" - Marx K., Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1976. p. 284.
5. "The Uses and Abuses of Business History" - Donald Coleman in Business History, Volume XXIX, No. 2, April 1987, pp. 141-156. Quote from page 147.
6. "Entrepreneurs and the Social Sciences" - Leslie Hannah in Economica, 51, pp. 219-254. Quote p. 219.
7. It is interesting to compare a comment made during a discussion of why history matters to managers at Harvard Business School. Richard Tedlow introduces the following revealing comment;
"You know when you're teaching here, there's no feeling in the gut that's worse than when you feel you've lost the thread of the course, that somehow you are just teaching a string of cases and nothing more. Many times, it is history that provides the thread and helps to give order to a mass of experience."
From "Why History Matters to Managers" From Harvard Business Review, January/February 1986. pp. 81-8.
8. "What is History?" - E.H. Carr, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964. pp. 65-6.
9. The major landmarks in the debate are Perry Anderson's "Origins of the Present Crisis" - New Left Review 23 and Tom Nairn's "The English Working Class" - New Left Review 24. Thompson replied with "The Peculiarities of the English" - Socialist Register, Eds. Ralph Miliband & John Saville, 1965. In 1978 Thompson widened the debate with "The Poverty of Theory and other Essays" - Merlin Press, London, 1978 to which Anderson responded with "Arguments within English Marxism" - New Left Books, London, 1980. The question of 'Culturalism' is discussed further in a debate between Thompson, Richard Johnson and Stuart Hall in "People's History and Socialist Theory" op. cit. pp. 375-409.
10. "The State in Capitalist Society" - Ralph Miliband, Quartet Books, London, 1969 and "Political Power and Social Classes" - Nicos Poulantzas, New Left Books, London 1973. "Marxism and Politics" - Miliband, Oxford University Press, Oxford 1977 and "State, Power, Socialism" - Poulantzas, New Left Books, London, 1978. The issues were debated in a series of articles in New Left Review.
11. Hannah op. cit. pp. 222-3.

Historical Method - Notes

12. "Social Analysis" - V.L. Allen, Longmans, London, 1975.
13. "The British Labour Movement to 1970" - Harold Smith, London, 1980 and "A Catalogue of Some Labour records in Scotland" - Ian MacDougall, Edinburgh, 1978.
14. See "Strikes" by Haynes M. in "The Working Class in England" Eds. J. Benson, London, 1985.

CHAPTER THREE : THE LABOUR PROCESS AND LABOUR POLITICS

This thesis examines the relationship between the labour process in road passenger transport and labour politics. The historical development of the labour process in the industry structures the possibilities of labour resistance and has a critical impact on the formation and development of that resistance. This resistance is mediated by trade unions and the institutional forms of industrial bargaining. Resistance is also critically structured by state intervention and control of the industry, the outcome of specific policies which trade unions themselves attempt to influence mainly through the medium of the Labour Party. Thus labour politics in turn structures the labour process. This relationship is not simple and straightforward for a number of reasons.

Firstly the question of resistance within the labour process has been a site of major debate since the publication of Harry Braverman's seminal 'Labour and Monopoly Capital'¹. Thus there remains a theoretical problem of the precise meaning of labour process and labour process resistance, not to mention a whole host of questions relating to notions such as skill, control, scientific management together with a further set of questions concerning other influences on the development of the labour process including competition, labour, capital and product markets, forms of ownership and state regulation, ownership and control.

Secondly there is the question of mediation between labour process resistance and labour politics. This process of mediation centres on institutions, in particular trade unions and working class political organisations which are the prime locations of consciousness formation, working class mobilisation and struggle as well as sites of compromise and suppression of conflict. In any discussion of

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

the politics arising out of production, trade unions clearly play a major role and merit particular attention. However whilst this may be the case, it would be, as Richard Hyman suggests, '...fallacious to exaggerate the autonomy of the processes of institutional mediation of the capital-labour antagonism.'² In other words discussion of industrial relations theory must be placed within the context of the capital-labour relation and not as something autonomous of it. At the same time it must be recognised that if resistance in the labour process is to be theorised in a marxist framework, then industrial relations theories must form an integral part of such an analysis. From this point of view the process of industrial relations is none other than the fetishised forms of the social relations of production.

Lastly the relationship between labour process and labour politics is distinct in three ways. Firstly consciousness arising from within production is by no means the only determination of political consciousness and political consciousness itself is a complex mixture of generalised class and narrow trade union and sectional consciousness. Consciousness is also determined by struggles over the social relations of production which can be mediated by considerations of family, religion, ethnicity, gender and nationalism. What is being asserted here is simply that politics in production are a primary, but not the only determinant, of labour politics. Secondly the relationship between the politics of the labour process within public transport industries is itself influenced and constrained by state intervention which is itself the product of struggle between different classes and class fractions over the distribution of resources. This struggle which takes place at city, regional and national level, influences the mode of operation and levels of provision of public transport. Thus the labour process in public transport is clearly structured by the outcome of political battles. This brings us to the third aspect of the relationship between the labour process

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

and labour politics in the industry which is the relative autonomy of each sphere. Struggles over the labour process and political struggles over transport policy are largely separate, a consequence of the more general institutional separation of politics to the sphere of electoral activity and economics to continuing trade union activity to improve conditions.

This chapter will explore these questions theoretically and is divided into two sections. The first examines questions arising from the conceptualisation of the labour process. The second examines trade unions as organisations with a critical mediating role and will attempt to draw out the relationship between labour process, labour resistance and labour politics in terms of the impact of the former on the formation and development of public transport policy.

1: The Labour Process

Braverman's "Labour and Monopoly Capital" substantially challenged existing theories. Firstly, his precise analysis of the changing conditions of work and the impact of these changes on class formation opened up a long and wide ranging debate. This drew together many different strands of sociological discussion concerning class formation, the changing class structure, the division of labour, the class position of white-collar and technical workers and united them in a discussion of changes in the nature of work itself. In broad terms, the accumulation of capital results in the continual attraction and repulsion of workers within the development of capitalist labour processes. As older branches of industry decline, or at least reduce employment, new branches arise, thus leading to a continual restructuring of the working class. Braverman himself is very careful to discuss changes in the labour process not

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

only of skilled manual workers, but also workers in 'white collar' occupations as well as in service work, regarding all these occupations as working class. This general view of class subordinates the explanation of change within the working class under a wider theory of change in the relationship between classes in the structuring of work. This thesis very much follows Braverman's views here. Consequently objections to the inclusion of bus workers within labour-process theory on the grounds of either being service workers or non-productive workers, have been discounted. Since the service workers in question here work under the same conditions as workers in manufacture, and since this is true of many other groups of service workers, then this profoundly alters the ground on which the current debates around changing class structure are conducted. Far from the working class being a declining force in advanced capitalist societies, it could be argued that the opposite is in fact the case. Or at the very least, that this assumption of decline is highly questionable.³

In considering the internal dynamics of labour processes under monopoly capitalism, Braverman emphasised three underlying changes in the nature of these labour processes;

"First, the necessity for capital to realise the potential of purchased labour power by transforming it into labour under its own control, thereby creating the basis for alienation. Second, that the origins of management lay in the struggle to devise the most effective means of imposing employer's will within a new social relations of production different in kind and scope to what had existed before. Third, that a division of labour based on a systematic sub-division of work, rather than simple distribution of crafts, is generalised only within the capitalist mode of production. The separation of work into constituent elements reflects the necessary principle for capital of dividing the craft to cheapen the parts, providing the basis for the subsequent destruction of all-round skills."⁴

Let us examine each in turn.

In terms of gaining control over the process of production we can simply note the change in status of horse-

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

bus and motor bus employees. The former were essentially sub-contractors who leased the vehicle, hired the horses and paid the ostler. The latter had no ownership of the means of production at all. In terms of increasing control over the labour process there is the introduction of fixed routes, fixed fares and timetables. The pay system was changed in the early days to payment per journey. This was followed by much stricter supervision and the development of an Inspectorate system which was gradually divided into different functions. Then there was the introduction of time clocks, punch cards and automatic time-clocks. Finally there was the gradual development of more and more sophisticated systems of scheduling work which ensured the maximum use of crew time. In short, there are many clear examples, of which only a few have been presented here, of gradually increased control over the labour process.

The other side of this development was the increase in management. Originally managers carried out largely technical functions concerning the maintenance of highly complex equipment. Thus tram industry management was dominated, quite understandably, by electrical engineers. There was a growth in supervisory grades with an increased reliance on Inspectors rather than public complaint, in ensuring that services ran to time and that the correct tickets were issued. The introduction of specialised scheduling clerks demonstrated the importance of intensifying work through ensuring the full utilisation of labour. Accountants gradually became more prominent in management as the industry began to control costs more effectively. Thus gradually a management structure emerged as the counterpoint to the increase in control over the labour process. All of these developments point to the growth of a more 'scientific' management aiming at increased control and greater intensity of work even if the links with Taylorism and 'Scientific Management' are less clear. In other words there was the definite employment of the essence of Taylorist methods, whether or not the management ever

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

espoused Taylorism as such.

The question of the removal of craft skills is more problematic. There is a notion of skill traditionally bound up with craft mastery, as Braverman explains;

"...that is to say, the combination of knowledge of materials and processes with the practised manual dexterities required to carry on a specific branch of production."

This notion of skill has been destroyed with '...the break up of craft skills and the reconstruction of production as a collective or social process' dominated by scientific, technical and engineering knowledge, concentrated in the hands of management and its closely associated staff organizations...'

'What is left to workers..' claims Braverman;

"...is a reinterpreted and woefully inadequate concept of skill: a specific dexterity, a limited and repetitious operation, "speed as skill" etc. With the development of the capitalist mode of production, the very concept of skill becomes degraded along with the degradation of labour and the yardstick by which it is measured shrinks to such a point that today the worker is considered to possess a "skill" if his or her job requires a few days' or a few weeks' training, several months of training is regarded as unusually demanding, and the job that calls for a learning period of six months or a year - such as computer programming - inspires a paroxysm of awe. (We may compare this with the traditional craft apprenticeship, which rarely lasted less than four years and which was not uncommonly seven years long.)"⁵

Clearly the traditional notion of skill as something requiring long years of apprenticeship and mastery over a whole range of techniques does not apply to road crews, though some measure of it may be retained among the more craft oriented of the maintenance and engineering staffs. Since the road crews are our main object of concern in this thesis, we will concentrate on them, beginning with drivers.

For many workers, it has been observed, driving to and from work is the most intellectually (in terms of the brain absorbing and processing information) and physically (in

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

terms of manual dexterity and coordination) demanding thing they do all day. Equally, it is an ability which most adults would expect to acquire. Driving is an example of a historically specific skill, as Braverman explains;

"In the circumstances of an earlier day, when a largely rural population learned the arts of managing horses as part of the process of growing up, while few as yet knew how to operate motorized vehicles, it might have made sense to characterize the former as part of a common heritage and thus no skill at all, while driving, as a learned ability, would have been thought of as a "skill". Today, it would be more proper to regard those who are able to drive vehicles as unskilled in that respect at least, while those who can care for, harness, and manage a team of horses are certainly the possessor of a marked and uncommon ability."⁶

Thus driving in this sense was a skill only in the early part of the century, since then it has become a part of the common 'heritage', especially as the result of the two world wars, both of which released a vast pool of experienced drivers onto the labour market.⁷ Essentially bus drivers have been socially deskilled, in the same way perhaps as the social position of clerks has been undermined by universal literacy.

A consequence of this is that the employers have been able to shift the greater part of the cost of training onto individuals and take advantage of a vast pool of potential labour. The average bus or coach driver receives about two weeks training in which most of the basic skills are assumed and what needs to be acquired is an ability to brake safely, to control a relatively large vehicle, to learn to avoid overhanging obstacles and to become familiar with the location of the controls, equipment and company facilities. However this in itself is not nearly enough. The real skills required can only be acquired with experience; for drivers have to learn how to avoid accidents (not merely avoiding other objects on the road as in car driving but avoiding injury to passengers who may be standing up or trying to board or alight whilst the vehicle is in motion). Drivers have to learn to work extremely quickly, sometimes too

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

quickly, not simply to 'keep to time' but because on stage carriage services the later a bus becomes the more passengers will be picked up and still more speed will be demanded. The peculiar nature of bus work, compared to assembly line work, is that the further you go back down the 'track' the faster it runs. Drivers also have to learn a tremendous amount of geography; they have to memorise every route, not merely how to get from A to B but by which precise route; the location of low bridges; the location of every bus stop, especially in city centres; and the correct route numbers and destination to display. Thus in terms of an impoverished notion of skill; bus drivers are skilled in terms of "speed as skill" and skill as experience and knowledge. Bus drivers are not skilled in the traditional sense of craft skills.

Conductors similarly possess a certain amount of skill in terms of "speed as skill", knowledge and experience, though perhaps to a slightly lesser extent. The conductor is responsible for signalling the driver to stop or move off, or to stop in an emergency. Once again the question of speed comes in, since to 'keep to time' requires getting passengers on and off quickly, assisting them if necessary and ensuring their safety. "Speed as skill" is necessarily a co-operative effort between the driver and conductor. The conductor also has to acquire a good geographical knowledge, not merely to know the exact routes but also the slang terms for different bus stops some of which may refer to buildings or landmarks which ceased to exist many years ago. They have to ensure that all passengers pay the correct fare or possess the correct and valid pass and ensure that no passenger 'overrides' (meaning deliberately travelling past the stop requested.) The conductor also has to ensure the bus does not become overloaded, no mean feat when attempting to collect seventy fares on two decks whilst being at the doors for every stop. Thus the conductor is in possession of skill in the impoverished sense.

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

The driver and conductor form a part of the 'collective worker' in the sense that the combination of their labour is necessary to operate the bus. Precisely because of this 'collective' sense of production, conductors and drivers wages have always been closely connected⁸. The crew of a bus along with many other crews, together with the engineering staffs and so on are part of the necessarily cooperative effort involved in producing the service. This social labour was by its very nature impossible to fragment any more by a further division of labour into still more specialised tasks. Consequently further fragmentation of the labour process is unlikely⁹. Neither could the introduction of one-person operation (O.P.O.) be interpreted as reskilling.

The divorce between conception and execution of tasks, the key element for Braverman in the process of deskilling, in other words deciding when and where buses would operate, how much the fares would be and so on, virtually always existed and thus bus and tram workers never possessed such skills. However, state intervention for safety reasons, resulting in licensing of drivers and conductors together with increased legal liabilities necessitated an increased level of training though hardly sufficient to amount to the possession of a skill. We will consider the consequences of possession of this type of skill for attempts by workers to exercise control over the labour process later. Let us turn our attention to some of the major criticisms of Braverman put forward.

1a : The Absence of Human Agency in Braverman Considered

Since the publication of 'Labour and Monopoly Capital' there have been numerous critiques of the theory put forward. A central thrust of these critiques concerns the lack of human agency; according to Littler and Salaman;

"...neither workers or managers play any conscious part either in the mediation of the relationship between the control and organization of the labour process and the

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

imperatives of capitalism, or in the development and acting out of struggles and negotiations."¹⁰

Richard Edwards makes a similar point;

"The book fails to take account of labor responses to the new forms of 'degraded' work that employers have developed. In Braverman's story, new, fragmented, deskilled methods of work are developed and implemented by capitalists with drastic effects on workers and little apparent resistance. No impact results from what resistance does occur. Unions play no role, and there is no class struggle."¹¹

These criticisms are commonplace but fundamentally, I would argue, misconceived. Let us first consider them in more detail.

According to Littler, Braverman assumes that `...worker's come to the factory gates as the carriers of a universal recalcitrance to capitalist authority.'¹² This has two significant consequences;

"Firstly it ignores the fact that the arenas of influence and control may be the school, the family and other non-work social institutions, such that workers come to the factory gates prepared to contribute effort in terms of customary standards and even beyond the bounds of organisational rules and work specifications."

Now this is a perfectly valid objection up to a point. Clearly to pretend that factors such as the family, education, religion, the media and a whole mass of other influences are entirely irrelevant would be absurd. However is it absurd to claim that work for the majority of people for the majority of their life is central to their life experience, that it shapes and dominates them, that it is fundamental to their perceptions, ideas and beliefs about the world, that it is in fact the determining influence on consciousness? This is not to ignore other influences but to assert their respective importance. Furthermore consciousness arising from the labour process is dependent on collective experience and the most common, widespread and persistent collective experience occurs in the workplace.

Which brings us to Littler's second point;

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

"...by assuming a universal recalcitrance on the part of 'labour', Braverman, paradoxically, is able to avoid consideration of specific trade union or shopfloor resistance to the process he describes. He tends to ignore or minimize the role of class struggle in the shaping of the labour process such that the employer is 'portrayed as having uncontested, unilateral control over the labour process.'..."

Does Braverman simply assume a universal recalcitrance on the part of labour? In fact he refers to a number of studies which demonstrate just this¹³. This general recalcitrance can be detected in the high labour turnover rates in the bus industry which has been a permanent feature since 1945 and has been only partially mitigated by mass unemployment.

As regards the lack of a place for class struggle in shaping the labour process Braverman himself makes quite explicit in his introduction to 'Labour and Monopoly Capital';

"This is a book about the working class as a class in itself, not as a class for itself...It is my feeling...that what is needed first of all is a picture of the working class as it exists, as the shape given to the working population by the capital accumulation process...This self-imposed limitation to the 'objective' content of class and the omission of the 'subjective' will, I fear, hopelessly compromise this study in the eyes of some of those who float in the conventional stream of social science. For them, by long habit and insistent theory, class does not really exist outside its subjective manifestations."¹⁴

Braverman is absolutely correct to stress this objective nature of class in the labour process for two reasons.

The first reason is that it is necessary to criticise the view that class only exists only in its subjective manifestations. A good example is Kelly, who claims that Braverman's methodology leads to;

"...an over-deterministic and mechanistic conception of capitalism as a law-governed politico-economic machine, and an underestimation of the actual role of class struggle in shaping the organisation, control and location of the labour process and of capital accumulation."¹⁵

Whilst Kelly is correct to point to the danger of an over

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

deterministic account, Braverman himself was reacting to the very opposite problem, the idea that class is merely based on subjectivity, that as E.P. Thompson once put it that;

"...class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs..."¹⁶

In this case the result would be an attempt to detach the labour process from its objective economic anchorage. This is indeed where Kelly ends up; he suggests rejecting as untenable the theoretical assumption that capital and its agents necessarily dominate the labour process.

The second reason concerns the part played by labour in the labour process under what Marx termed 'machinofacture'. Braverman refers to the impact of the 'scientific technical revolution' on 'modern industry'. Whilst the imposition of scientific management associated with deskilling could be and was in fact resisted, the scope for resistance in modern industry is more limited. According to Littler, modern industry '...is the period where 'The production process has ceased to be a labour process in the sense of a process dominated by labour as its governing unity.'¹⁷ The quote is from Marx's 'Grundrisse' and is worth continuing;

"Labour appears, rather, merely as a conscious organ, scattered among the individual living workers at numerous points of the mechanical system; subsumed under the total process of the machinery itself, as itself only a link in the system, whose unity exists not in the living workers, but rather in the living (active) machinery, which confronts his individual, insignificant doings as a mighty organism...The accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain, is thus absorbed into capital as opposed to labour, and hence appears as an attribute of capital..."¹⁸

In this sense, then, capital is completely dominant. The development of 'modern industry' results in the real rather than formal subsumption of labour under capital. As one contemporary described the London bus driver '...he is but a cog in a vast machine...'¹⁹ Thus in order to avoid a subjectivist notion of class and in order to stress the real

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

subordination of labour in the production process, Braverman correctly emphasises the objective nature of class.

However, Braverman's objectivist notion raises a problem, he is in danger of dispensing with the concept of human agency altogether. As Tony Elger claims; Braverman's conceptualization;

"...is seriously disabling. It warrants a treatment of the working class as an object of capital, which, while underlining the capacity of capital to reorganise the labour process, degrade the labourer, and propel him/her from sector to sector, forgets that the working class remains an active agency in the capital relation."²⁰

Elger makes a series of objections which are worth investigating further. These are;

- (1) Braverman fails to investigate the difference between absolute and relative surplus value and the relationship between these forms and formal and real subsumption of labour under capital. Whereas in Marx discussion of the forms of capitalist reorganization of the labour process are situated in alternative strategies of surplus value production, each with inherently different limits and contradictions and characteristic forms of class struggle.
- (2) In recognising the problem of capitalist control over the labour process, Braverman conceptualizes worker opposition in inadequate terms; either craft expertise or general hostility. He fails to appreciate the manner in which specialized expertise and craft competence may be embedded within a complex structure of collective labour effectively subordinated to capital accumulation.
- (3) Skilled workers ('complex competences' in Elger's terms) may be subjected to extended working days or collective organization may achieve skilled status and pay with little evidence of craft expertise. There is thus a problem with Braverman's conception of the relationship between skill and control.
- (4) Braverman's discussion of the organization of the labour process remains for the most part at the level of its theorization by 'management scientists'. He thus fails to

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

give sufficient consideration to the conditions in which the strategies are implemented and the effectiveness of worker's resistance.²¹

These four points can be subsumed under one problem; that of applying Braverman's theory to specific, concrete, historical situations. For example, in the case of bus drivers; it is hard to maintain that the job is a craft skill yet London bus driver's in 1919 were much better paid than many skilled workers. In the industry 'Taylorism' as a specific management ideology was certainly not employed. As Littler points out, it was not Taylorism but the Bedaux system that was adopted in many instances in the inter-war period.²² Elger, using the work of marxist historians such as Foster, Hobsbawm and Stedman-Jones, points out many concrete instances where real subordination and the loss of craft skill are not synonymous. In other words there is a problem when attempting to apply Braverman's schema to real, concrete, historical situations. However this problem stems, not from Braverman himself, but from a failure to understand the structure of Marx's work. In other words, as I shall attempt to show, there is no reason why the general outline of Braverman's work cannot be retained.

1b : Marx, Braverman and his Critics.

Braverman's work, as Elger correctly points out, is distorted by a reliance on Baran and Sweezy's analysis of monopoly capitalism with its reduced emphasis on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall and its consequently 'underconsumptionist' view of capitalist crisis. This need not concern us here. Far more important is the failure of the critics to grasp the relationship of Braverman to Marx. In essence Braverman provides a theory of the labour process based on Volume One of 'Capital'. Braverman does not however discuss Marx's complex method of abstraction. Nor does he explain the distinct part played by Volume One in the

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

structure of 'Capital' as a whole. In other words Braverman has inherited from Marx a particular method of examining the labour process as it develops in general, in abstraction from competition and the market.

Let us consider the nature of abstraction first. According to Rosdolsky's ²³ investigations into the making of Marx's 'Capital', Marx's method consists of '...ascending from the abstract to the concrete...' as the only scientific way of '...appropriating the concrete and reproducing it as the concrete in thought..' As Marx put it in the Grundrisse; '...the concrete is concrete because it is the synthesis of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse'. Thought then is a process of synthesis, that is '...a progressive reconstruction of the concrete from the most simple abstract definitions of the concrete itself.' Science, which begins with the real and concrete, without first abstracting from it ends up with an indistinct and undefined of the world. As Marx puts it in this famous quote from the Grundrisse;

"The population is an abstraction if I leave out, for example, the classes of which it is composed. These classes in turn are an empty phrase if I am not familiar with the elements on which they rest. For example wage-labour, capital etc. These latter in turn presuppose exchange, division of labour, prices etc. For example, capital is nothing without wage-labour, without value, money, price etc. Thus if I were to begin with population, this would be a chaotic conception of the whole, and I would then, by means of further determination, move analytically towards ever more simpler concepts, from the imagined concrete towards ever thinner abstractions until I had arrived at the simplest determinations. From there the journey would have to be retraced until I had finally arrived at the population again, but this time not as the chaotic conception of the whole, but as a rich totality of many determinations and relations."²⁴

Thus for Marx, especially in 'Capital', the method begins by a process of abstraction from the concrete, ascending from these abstractions back to the concrete. Because of this method it is easy to mistake abstractions for the final

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

expression of the concrete. Taking the labour theory of value as an example;

"The usual short formulation of this theory holds that the value of a commodity depends on the quantity of labour socially necessary for its production; or, in a general formulation, that labour is hidden behind, is contained in, value: value = 'materialized' labour."

However this is a misleading formulation;

"It is more accurate to express the labour theory of value inversely: in the commodity-capitalist economy, production relations among people, necessarily acquire the form of the value of things, and can only appear in this material form; social labour can only be expressed in value...The labour theory of value is not based on an analysis of exchange transactions as such in their material form, but on the analysis of those social production relations expressed in the transactions."²⁵

This complex dialectical method of abstraction is Marx's means of penetrating the essence of a relation from its appearance.

The second point concerns the structure of capital. The great chapters on the labour process in 'Capital' occur in Volume One which deals exclusively with 'Capital in General', in other words by assuming that all commodities exchange at their value, Marx deals with capital in abstraction from competition, the market and the state. Volume Two deals with the circulation of capital and only Volume Three deals with the sphere of 'many capitals'. Volume One, then, is not '...an arbitrary abstraction, but an abstraction which grasps the specific characteristics which distinguish capital from all other forms of wealth...These are aspects common to every capital as such...' ²⁶ Necessarily, then, the picture of the labour process thus presented is an abstraction. Marx then goes on to qualify this idea of abstraction; '...however capital in general, as distinct from particular real capitals, is itself a real existence...' Thus the form of the theory of the labour process, is a theory which is both an abstraction from concrete reality but nevertheless has a real existence.

Thus whilst it is true that Marx describes the

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

relationship between class struggle and the labour process, even this is part of an abstraction, hence the struggle in question is over the introduction of laws to limit the working day, a generalised struggle in which competition between capitalists and the workings of the market are largely irrelevant. Nevertheless it is a real struggle, with a real existence. Indeed considering Elger's first objection to Braverman, listed previously, whereby he contrasts Braverman's rather limiting discussion of the transformation of the labour process to Marx's `...discussion of the development of `real' subordination.. this development being situated in `...alternative strategies of surplus-value production, each with inherent limits and contradictions and characteristic forms of class struggle...'; one feels entitled to ask where Marx actually discusses these characteristic forms of class struggle in relationship to different strategies of surplus-value production? The truth is that he only discusses class struggle in this part of `Capital' in terms of a particular abstraction from competition and the market.

Elger's remaining objections; the limited conceptualization of worker opposition as either craft expertise or general hostility; the failure of some crafts to resist extensive exploitation whilst apparently unskilled workers can achieve skilled status; and the discussion of Taylorism in terms of Taylor's ideas rather than the general application of scientific management; can all be dealt with in the same way. Precisely because of the level of abstraction, precisely because both Marx and Braverman deal with `Capital in General' in abstraction from competition and the market it would not be possible to answer these objections without concrete, specific, historical studies which include competition and the market. If Elger is making a case for exceptions to deskilling as a tendency or for the ability of some apparently unskilled workers to maintain a hold over production, he is absolutely correct to do so; if, on the other hand, he is arguing that there is not a general

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

tendency towards deskilling, or that craft workers do not generally have a greater hold than unskilled workers over production, then he is wrong. Similarly with Taylorism, as Thompson argues; `...because writers like Braverman define Taylorism so broadly, it is easy for others to describe it as a failure by defining it narrowly as a series of initiatives specific to Taylor, rather than as the move towards `scientific` management generally..`, yet, `...the existence of the methods themselves are reluctantly accepted as a basic fact of industrial life.`²⁷

When competition and the market are brought into the picture, what effect does this have on the theory? For Littler, it destroys it;

"...the realization of surplus-value (i.e. finding markets, selling in those markets, and making a profit) may be more crucial than the production of surplus-value for certain firms, certain industries or during certain periods. On the shopfloor a negotiated order may have been reached, a phase of accommodation, as in the British engineering industry between 1850-1890...In general we can conclude that the link between the logic of capital accumulation and transformations of the labour process is an indirect and varying one."²⁸

Now it is true that by expanding the market and increasing production it is possible, without transforming the labour process, without increasing the rate of exploitation, to increase the overall mass of surplus-value produced and consequently realized. Once the market ceases to expand, competition drives down prices, and in order for the mass of surplus-value to be increased, the rate of exploitation must be increased either by reducing wages or transforming the labour process. The logic of capital accumulation necessarily asserts itself sooner or later, in the transformation of the labour process. This is not an indirect or varying but a determining influence. Littler, by applying an abstraction derived from a theory of `Capital in General`, avoids examining the question of how this theory expresses itself when competition is brought into the picture. Competition is, conceptually; `...none other than the inner nature of capital appearing and realized as the

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

interaction of many capitals.²⁹ This is precisely why the abstraction 'capital in general' is nevertheless real, because it asserts itself in the field of capitalist competition.

Littler argues persuasively that; '...there is a relative autonomy of the labour process such that it is necessary to introduce the concept of employer strategies'³⁰ This is to invert reality; of course employers have different strategies but the heart of these strategies is always to raise the rate of accumulation, and competition eventually will ensure by asserting the logic of capital accumulation, that the labour process is repeatedly transformed. However just how the labour process is transformed is a complex matter. As Armstrong has pointed out, nowhere does Braverman rely on an 'iron law' of deskilling or predict the outcome of individual cases on the basis of such a law. There are two reasons for this.

Firstly because as Braverman points out the '...scientific and managerial attack upon the labour process over the past century involves all its aspects; labour power, the materials of labour and the products of labour...'³¹ Thus not all instances of change in the labour process rely on changes in the nature of labour power. Secondly;

"This displacement of labour as the subjective element of the process and its subordination as an objective element in a productive process now conducted by management is an ideal realized by capital only within definite limits and unevenly amongst industries. This principle is itself restrained in its application by the nature of the various specific and determinate processes of production. Moreover its very application brings into being new crafts and skills and technical specialities which are at first the province of labour rather than management."³²

In road passenger transport there were short periods of rapid technical innovation of the instruments of labour such as the electrification of tramways and the introduction of

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

the petrol bus in the early part of the century. These qualitative changes were followed by quantitative changes in the size of vehicles which up until the mid-1980's grew steadily larger and also there was a slow increase in the acceleration and braking capacities. Labour-power was placed under a direct employment system, which replaced a sub-contracting system at the same time as electrification and mechanisation. Beginning in the early 1950's (although there are some earlier examples) and gathering pace in the late 1960's and 1970's conductors were gradually replaced by O.P.O. (one person operation). Equally the intensity of labour increased either through increased speed of operation, increased traffic congestion both of which were gradual quantitative changes. The shift from formal subsumption of labour under capital, that is the end of sub-contracting to the real subsumption of labour through complete control of the labour process by management is no more than an ideal which was continually fought for in a variety of ways. In terms of the products of labour, these remain qualitatively the same, that is the outcome of labour is the movement of passengers from one spatial location to another. However quantitatively the product changes through a continuous increase in average size of vehicles from the early part of the century which by 1985 was replaced by a tendency for a greater number of smaller vehicles, usually minibuses, to be employed.

The changes in the labour process since the mid-1980's may be thought to exonerate Littler. The use of smaller vehicles on increased frequencies, in some cases even the reintroduction of conductors may be seen as a strategy of reducing the intensification of labour which would directly contradict Braverman. However this has to be seen against a background of the break up of the nationalised sector, the removal of public monopoly, the relaxation of rules governing the types of labour that may be employed, the destruction of national union agreements, and the removal of the fair wages clause of the Road Traffic Act. These

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

represent a major restructuring of an industry in crisis in the midst of recession and can hardly be seen as a refutation of the general principle that increasing the rate of capital accumulation is the main purpose of restructuring of the labour process, as Braverman so persuasively argued. However, there still remains a problem. How can workers not possessed of craft skills resist increased control over the labour process?

lc : Is skill necessary for control over the labour process?

According to Nichols and Beynon, following Braverman "...the controls that particular groups of workers were able to obtain over the work process by virtue of their skills and their detailed knowledge of production, served (with the onset of the machine age) as an important impediment to the development of capital."³³ Does this mean, then, that bus and tram workers, since they only possessed skills in a very impoverished sense, since they could not be 'deskilled', were unable to resist changes in the labour process? Nichols and Beynon continue;

"Skill is not essential to control. It is possible for unskilled workers, subdivided into routine repetitive jobs, to use their collective strength to oppose capital. Such opposition has been another sporadic feature of capitalism this century."

This statement is open to misinterpretation, for in order to resist workers must have some hold over the production process.

The case of the gas-workers bears directly on this point. Although generally considered unskilled, they were able to win union recognition and very substantial improvements in wages and conditions because;

"The industry had fallen into a rut, and worked without a margin. Nothing stood between it and breakdown, except the personal efforts of experienced men."³⁴

In response the industry embarked on a major programme of new investment and re-equipment which would no longer leave

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

them at the mercy of 'experienced' men. Having won union recognition on the simple basis of possessing sufficient 'skill' in the impoverished sense of the word; 'skill' as experience; they were able to maintain it. For, as Hobsbawm concludes;

"Labour-saving and labour-simplifying devices do not, however, automatically dislodge key groups of workers from their strongholds. They do so only when such groups are unable to maintain their relative indispensability (i.e. their bargaining strength) during the crucial transition period."³⁵

This view is developed further by Penn, in his study of skilled manual workers in engineering. Penn concludes that '...it was the differences in forms of worker organisation and worker resistance during the transition to highly mechanised factory production in Rochdale that largely determined whether or not specific groups were skilled in Rochdale in the 1850's...' ³⁶ However it is one thing to maintain 'skill' in the face of 'deskilling' in the short-term. It is quite another to maintain it permanently or to assume that management would not remove such benefits when the balance of power shifts in their direction as Armstrong argues. ³⁷ More fundamentally, control here is being used in a way quite different to Braverman, indeed we are not really talking about control in terms of the combination of conceptualisation and execution of tasks but of some measure of negotiation over tasks already pre-determined by the managerial conceptualisation of those tasks. Hobsbawm and Penn are not discussing control as such over the labour process but rather the possibilities of resistance within it. Penn, unlike Hobsbawm, combines a theory of technological determinism coupled with voluntarism in industrial relations. Skill here, has been completely detached from any objective connection with the labour process and presented not as a combination of objective and subjective factors but purely in terms of strength of union organisation.

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

Thus here we have a choice between three different conceptions of the relationship of skill and control. Braverman offers a purely objective account in which only workers with control over conceptualisation as well as execution of tasks can really be said to control the labour process. Those groups with an impoverished level of skill, skill as a combination of speed and experience, cannot ultimately exercise control over the whole labour process. Hobsbawm argues that even the possession of skill as experience, allows for limited control over the labour process in terms of unionisation and consequently limits managerial control in day to day operation. Penn goes still further and claims that skill is determined by the strength of union organisation. Which theory best explains the types of controls exercised over the labour process in the road passenger transport industry?

ld : Control in Road Passenger Transport.

One of the key features of a public transport system is precisely its systematic nature; trains, trams or buses have to operate as part of an overall system which necessarily requires tight control and coordination. The result of cooperation in the labour process is to give labour a social character which is nevertheless an aspect of capitalist control. Individual workers `...enter into relations with the capitalist, but not with each other. Their cooperation only begins with the labour process...on entering the labour process they are incorporated into capital.'³⁸

The formal subjection of labour to capital, the result of the worker working for capitalist instead of for him/herself is not a sufficient condition for capitalist production. `That a capitalist should command in the field of production is now as indispensable as that a general should command on the field of battle.'³⁹ It is critical that that formal subjection be turned into real subjection, that the labour-

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

power that the capitalist has purchased result in the application of labour to the process of production, that labour be subsumed under capital. This is the function of control.

But as Marx pointed out, capitalist control is two-fold in content;

"...owing to the two-fold nature of the process of production which has to be directed - on the one hand a social labour process for the creation of a product, and on the other hand capital's process of valorization - in form is purely despotic...An industrial army of workers under the command of a capitalist requires, like a real army, officers (managers) and N.C.O.'s (foremen, overseers) who command during the labour process in the name of capital. The work of supervision becomes their established and exclusive function."⁴⁰

This two-fold nature of production; on the one hand coordination of collective labour with an increasing social character and on the other hand to ensure the production of surplus-value results in a system of control on which the latter, stamps its hierarchical and despotic character. Littler, following Cressey and MacInnes, claims that this dual nature of production requires a contradictory relationship between capital and labour, since capitalists need to '...stimulate motivation and harness labour's creative and productive powers'. Thus capitalists '...seek a co-operative relationship with labour...Similarly, side-by-side with labour's resistance to subordination lies the fact that workers have an interest in the maintenance of the capital/labour relation and the viability of the units of capital which employ them.'⁴¹ The fact that the capital-labour relationship is concealed behind a veneer of common interest is not a consequence of the social character of production but rather an attempt to suppress this social character, in order to maintain control. It is the experience of collective labour that is crucial to the development of resistance inside the labour process.

The second aspect of this co-operation stressed by

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

Cressey and MacInnes, that workers have an interest in the continuation of the capital/labour relation and the viability of individual units of capital which employ them is largely the result of the fetishised appearance of reality. As Burawoy wrote about his own experience in a machine shop;

"In short, as we slaved away on our machines...we manufactured not only parts of diesel engines, not only relations of cooperation and domination, but also consent to those activities and relations."⁴²

Now control is obviously easier if workers in the process of production internalise and reproduce the conditions of their own domination. Consciousness is crucial here and Burawoy's conception of the production of consent in the very process of production is extremely useful provided that the same production process is seen as equally capable of producing dissent. This is an important distinction, whereas Burawoy believes that '...the day to day adaptations of workers create their own ideological effects that become focal elements in the operation of capitalist control',⁴³ it must also be true to say that the day to day operation of control creates ideological effects that become focal elements in the opposition of workers.

Some writers have confused the relation between control and consent, thus Thompson argues quite wrongly that '...The objective fact of control ultimately depends on the existence of subjective consent'.⁴⁴ In the early years of the bus industry there are a number of examples where the existence of subjective consent was achieved by the sacking of entire workforces, 'pour encourager les autres'. Consent may be produced in the process of production, far more frequently consent cannot be left to chance but has to be organised. It will be argued in Section Two of this chapter that consent is largely the product of the process of mediation. Let us return to the issue of control.

In Marx the transformation of manufacture to machinofacture was precisely the point at which the labour

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

process ceased to be a process dominated by labour as its governing unity. This was the point at which men became a mere appendage to the machine and the process dominated by the pace of machinery;

"In handicrafts and manufacture, the workman makes use of a tool, in the factory the machine makes use of him. There the movements of the instrument of labour proceeded from him, here it is the movements of the machine that he must follow. In manufacture the workers are parts of a living mechanism. In the factory we have a lifeless mechanism independent of the workmen, who becomes its mere living appendage."⁴⁵

It was also the point at which formal subsumption of labour under capital gave way to real subsumption of labour under capital. Historically this point corresponds to the introduction of electrification of tramways, which resulted in the building of tram systems as opposed to individual lines. This took place at the turn of the century. In the bus industry it corresponds to the conjunction of mechanisation and systematic operation. In London this occurred just before the First World War and outside London in the 1930's. Municipal tram systems which gradually converted to bus operation maintained this real subsumption of labour under capital.

A public transport system operates ideally, from the managements point of view, like a vast machine with trams or buses operating at regular intervals along a network of tracks or routes at speeds which are determined by the technical possibilities of the equipment. However this is only the ideal, operators cannot control the environment, roads have to be shared with other vehicles, all sorts of unforeseen problems may impede the movement of vehicles and so on. Unlike factory machinery, the speed of the bus or tram is controlled by the driver. On the one hand the driver is `...but a small cog in the great machine...'⁴⁶, on the other hand bus and tram crews have a certain level of autonomy and freedom from direct supervision. Consequently control is contradictory because of this necessary freedom and autonomy.

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

Nevertheless the freedom and autonomy are largely illusory. Firstly because there are Inspectors or 'spots' permanently checking timekeeping. Secondly the crew are most of the time carrying passengers on the vehicle which means that they are constantly observed and can be reported by the customers. Thirdly the nature of the work itself ensures that crews do not run late since this leads to a greater accumulation of passengers on the road and more work, whereas running early results in trouble with the Inspectors. Thus crews are essentially subordinated to the 'plan' as represented by the timetable, which details to the last minute where the vehicle should be at any time. Paradoxically, whilst the machine is subordinated to the control of the driver, the driver is subordinated to the pace of the system which is pre-ordained. The driver thus becomes an appendage of the machine whilst paradoxically the faster he or she can make it run, the easier work becomes. Bus and tram crews are thus an appendage of a vast social mechanism which operates independently of them, whilst they apparently control the machinery they operate, in reality it controls them. Their work situation corresponds to that of the worker under machinofacture, they suffer the effects of real subsumption under capital.

This real as opposed to formal subsumption⁴⁷ had to be imposed in the following way. Firstly crews had to be 'freed' from control over the means or instruments of production. Secondly control over work organisation and execution had to be removed from them and planning had to become the responsibility of management. Thirdly the level of supervision had to be increased and the areas of control had to be defined by the introduction of increasing numbers of rules and regulations. A note of caution is required here. In many cases this real subsumption was a condition of electrification and mechanisation, it was not the case as in engineering that the old methods had to be replaced by new ones. New sections of capital emerged in a largely new

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

industry which revolutionised methods of production as a precondition for massive expansion. Thus the new methods were imposed on a largely new workforce. Let us deal with these points in more detail.

Firstly crews had to be 'freed' from any control over the means and instruments of production. They had to be made full employees of the company and no longer casual labour hired by the day. The practice of conductors and drivers sharing a proportion of the takings, a hangover from coaching days had to be eliminated. All revenue became the property of the company which was enforced by the introduction of ticket machines. This led to a strike in London in 1891 over just this issue, which was defeated. Thus ended the quasi-self-employed status of bus workers in London.

Secondly a timetable had to be devised independently of the crews, in the case of trams this was a technological imperative. In the case of buses it was the result of the development of a systematic service. This took place in large cities earlier than in the inter-urban and rural areas and was linked to the monopolisation of the industry. In 1930 the Road Traffic Act imposed this requirement of timetabling on all stage carriage services and resulted in the final elimination of the rough and ready methods of the 1920's. Timetabling was crucial in two ways; Firstly it removed control over running speeds from the crews and allowed the 'scientific' planning of work, by management. Secondly it was an attempt to plan work organisation and to bureaucratically control the environment in which crews operated. At first this was the 'rough and ready' application of science in terms of rules of thumb and custom and practice. Eventually it would lead via 'Speed' in London to computer modelling and management exercises such as the Market Analysis Project carried out by the National Bus Company in the early 1980's, which resulted in large-scale intensification of work.

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

Thirdly the amount of direct supervision on the road had to be increased. Inspectors duties and responsibilities increased to cover timekeeping, ticket inspection (to ensure that the conductor was not losing revenue through missing passengers on fare collection and more importantly to ensure that the conductor was not engaged in diverting company revenue into his or her own pocket) and general crew behaviour on the road (which covered politeness, standard of driving, correct uniform and so on). Thus the Inspectors job was essentially enforcing the real subordination of labour to capital which had been planned in advance by timetabling. Inspectors themselves had to be controlled and supervised by systems of Senior Inspectors and special groups of Inspectors charged with revenue protection and so on. In order for direct supervision to be effective the number of rules and regulations governing operation had to be increased enormously. Partly this was the result of legal regulation, especially the 1930 Road Traffic Act, partly it was the result of local and national state control of the industry, but most of all it was the result of an attempt by capital to dominate the process of production. To take an ever popular theme amongst drivers; management have generally imposed greater and greater speed in increasingly more difficult traffic conditions. Rules over driving procedures have at the same time been tightened up to ensure that any accident that resulted was the fault of the driver for failing to observe the rules. Yet it was a common observation that if the rules were obeyed to the letter then no bus would ever move.

Thus the relationship between skill and control in the road passenger transport industry is dependent on two factors. Objectively workers cannot exert control over the labour process since monopolisation led to formal subsumption under capital; workers were separated from the ownership of the means of production and the execution of tasks was separated from their conceptualisation. However,

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

subjectively, the gap between formal subsumption and real subsumption was quite large. Firstly because the nature of the work enforced a certain contradictory type of control with limited degrees of freedom and autonomy within the labour process. Secondly through the collective power which union organisation expressed, workers were able to gain increasing control over the conditions under which they were subordinated. In other words they could exercise a limited but nevertheless important measure of job control or regulation. This could be done by negotiated rules over scheduling, legislation over driving hours, controls over the allocation of overtime, the restriction of recruitment and other forms of job regulation and control; all of which will be discussed in the historical chapters. Let us now consider the other side of the coin, the problem of managerial control.

le : The Development of Managerial Control over the Labour Process

One problem with some labour process theories, for example Richard Edwards's 'Contested Terrain'⁴⁸ is that the labour process is seen essentially as labour-led. In other words that theory focuses too closely on labour resistance neglecting the role of management. Furthermore the impact of competition between companies, the impact of the market or in marxist terms, the complete circuit of capital which is concerned with both production and realisation of surplus-value is largely ignored. Managerial control concerns more features than simply control over the labour process. We need to consider this wider aspect of control, the 'visible hand', as Chandler calls it, which determines enterprise structure and policy. If Edwards theories are seen as problematic because they are 'labour led', then equally whilst '...Chandler most certainly does not fall into the trap of constructing a 'labour-led' theory,...through this omission he comes dangerously close to advancing a

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

'capital-led' theory or more precisely a theory that is 'management-led'⁴⁹. In other words it is no solution to remove labour from the picture altogether. However Chandler, far more impressively than his British imitators, provides an interesting view not just of the development of modern management but also the way in which managerial control, in transport, increasingly dominates the market. This contrasts directly with Kelly's attempt to move 'beyond Braverman' in assigning a critical role to market competition in the development of the labour process⁵⁰. The strength of Chandler's historical research is precisely the way in which increasing control over the labour process directly parallels the attempt to control the market.

Chandler traces the origins of modern management in America back to the railways. The technology made possible fast, all weather transportation but required the '...creation of a sizeable administrative organisation. It meant the employment of a set of managers to supervise these functional activities over an extensive geographical area; and the appointment of an administrative command of middle and top executives to monitor, evaluate, and co-ordinate the work of managers responsible for day-to-day operations. It meant, too, the formulation of brand new types of internal administrative procedures, and accounting and statistical controls.' In short the operational requirement of the railways was '...the first administrative hierarchies in American Business.'⁵¹ In great detail which cannot be repeated here, Chandler shows how railways, out of necessity, produced organisational innovation;

"Railways...were the first to require a large number of salaried managers; the first to have a central office operated by middle managers and commanded by top managers who reported to a board of directors. They were the first American business enterprise to build a large internal organisation structure with carefully defined lines of responsibility, authority and communication between the central office, departmental headquarters and field units; and they were the first to develop financial and statistical flows to control and evaluate the work of the many managers."⁵²

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

This was not all. The creation of an efficient national transport system required not merely tight internal organisation (control over the labour process) but after the Civil War `...external relations were becoming as critical to the successful operation of the new large railroads as were the development of the new large railroads as were the development of internal organisation and controls before the war.'⁵³ The interaction of cooperation and competition, a fascinating story which cannot be recounted here (and which precedes and has interesting parallels with the same mixture in road passenger transport), resulted in what Chandler terms `system building'.

This had three essential features. Firstly companies shifted from a territorial to an interterritorial strategy in order to build self-contained systems. By 1893 the pattern of U.S. railways was essentially fixed until the post 1945 decline of the industry. Secondly, the companies that transformed into systems were by and large the first large roads in their regions, by 1893 69 companies, with a capitalisation exceeding \$100 millions, controlled 69% of the network. Thirdly `...salaried career executives played a critical role in the system building of the 1880's. The managers, far more than the speculators and investors, defined strategic plans and directed tactical manoeuvres.'⁵⁴ The lines controlled solely by speculators did badly in comparison. They came to use speculators to obtain the support of investors and increasingly made alliances with investment banking firms like J.P. Morgan.

By the 1890's this alliance with investment bankers, necessary in the world of oligopolistic competition in which the actions of competitors were of more significance than the market, led to the modern decentralised, divisional form of organisation, exemplified by Thompson's Pennsylvania Company. The scale of the system was enormous and rivalled

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

the American state⁵⁵.

This new form of 'managerial enterprise' was in the U.S.A., '...the dominant form in the operations of another quite different type of transportation - mass transit in American cities.'⁵⁶ Electrification bought '...consolidation and centralized administration...The full-time salaried managers hired to administer these enterprises established organisational structures and accounting and statistical controls. These they borrowed directly from the railways.' These managers had to share decisions with a handful of entrepreneurs who specialised in negotiating mergers, raising funds and making the necessary political arrangements to win franchises. Among their number was none other than Charles T. Yerkes, who in similar fashion dominated the consolidation of London's Underground and no doubt would have carried out the same operation on the tramways but for the municipal control.

There is considerable evidence that railway methods were vital in the development of management in both the tram and bus industry in Britain. British Electric Traction (B.E.T.) certainly adopted a railway style of management, including the division of their territory into seven areas with a Superintendent at the head and gold passes issued to senior management. They also adopted railway methods of accounts and management information systems. Emile Garcke, one of the founders, wrote "Factory Accounts" in 1888, a '...landmark in British scientific management...'⁵⁷. Railway methods were transplanted onto the provincial bus industry after 1928 as several company accounts suggest. Thus as certain evidence of the transfer of railway methods into the industry there is B.E.T.; the largest private tram company; there is the presence of Yerkes himself in London; there is the introduction of 'American Methods' into the early British tram industry and most important of all, the interest of the big four railway companies in the provincial bus industry after their alliance in 1928 with Tillings and B.E.T.

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

Without them, the imposition of real subsumption of labour under capital would have been almost impossible, as Crosland-Taylor, the manager at Crosville commented '...there were no reliable statistics..'58 This was at a time when the company owned 580 vehicles travelling over 17 million miles a year and carrying 50 million passengers.

Thus Chandler sums up the development of American transportation and communications, (rail, urban transit, telegraph, telephones and postal services);

"The operational requirements of the new technologies had made obsolete the competition between small units that had no control over prices - prices that were set by the market forces of supply and demand. At the opening of the new century, economists, businessmen, and politicians were groping for a new theory of 'natural monopoly' and for new methods of public control over and regulation of those enterprises that were no longer regulated by market mechanisms."59

Chandler's analysis is a useful corrective to Edwards and Kelly. In stressing the growth of managerial enterprise with the power to determine enterprise structure and policy rather than the role of capital markets, government policy, worker opposition or such vague and often vacuous notions of entrepreneurial 'spirit' or culture, Chandler has emphasised the measure of control over production that these monopolies and oligopolies have. Thus when we examine control over the labour process, a process in which labour is no longer the governing unity, we need to be clear just how limited a part of the production process this is. Managerial control attempts in different ways to control the labour process, but it also attempts to control markets; both product and capital markets, cooperation and competition; the location and extent of production; the type of technology in use and so on. In short, managerial control sets parameters and constraints on the labour process inside which labour may be able to bargain.

In the United States, mass public transit was electrified

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

by 'managerial enterprise' and a tiny group of entrepreneurs like Yerkes. In Britain, tramway electrification was the result overwhelmingly of municipal monopoly. This was the first step of state interest in public transport, it was followed by regulation both of competition and for public safety and finally by state ownership of almost the entire operation of stage carriage (that is regular, timetabled) services. What impact did the state have on the labour process?

If : The Impact of State Regulation, Control and Ownership on the Labour Process.

There are two questions to be answered here; firstly how does state regulation and control affect the labour process? Secondly does state ownership alter the character of the labour process in ways which are substantially different to monopoly ownership? The intention here is simply to draw out some general principals concerning state intervention.

The first effect of state regulation, control and ownership was to strengthen the trend towards bureaucratisation of the industry, it also strengthened the state bureaucracy. Bureaucracy here does not simply imply the tendency towards legal and administrative regulation, the importance of the 'files' and trained 'experts' as Weber accurately characterised it, it means above all '...a social stratum of officialdom, which is an instrument of rule from above in society, institutionally detached from the mass it is organised to manage'⁶⁰. There were several strands to this process. Firstly, even without state intervention, increasing control over the labour process required the creation of a bureaucracy of inspectors, foreman, superintendants, cashiers, scheduling staff and planners. State control and regulation necessitated even greater control, since the stipulation of maximum driving hours, maximum continuous driving hours and minimum rest periods

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

all reinforced the need for more systematic scheduling so as to extract the maximum production. Fair wages clauses enforced the intensification of the labour process and consequently bureaucratisation. In addition licensing of drivers and conductors both reduced the casual labour supply, increasing the bargaining position of labour and necessitated proper facilities for training labour.

Secondly state regulation and control stimulated the growth of bureaucracy through the regulation of all aspects of production; tramway construction, the licensing of bus routes and operators through the Traffic Commissioners, the insurance of vehicles and operators, the regular testing of vehicles, the production of fare charts and timetables, planning permission to erect and move bus stops, controls over safety aspects of vehicle design and so on.

Thirdly these controls increased the bureaucracy of the state, the Ministry of Transport grew in size, importance and complexity. In order to deal with the increasing demands of licensing, taxation and inspection; the appointment of Traffic Commissioners, the London Passenger Transport Board, the British Transport Commission; Highway planning and administration and the continuous development of legislation controlling all forms of Transport; the state bureaucracy continued to expand. From small beginnings in 1919, the Ministry grew by 1955 to employ 15,500 staff.⁶¹

In whose interest did state intervention operate? Within the industry the state operated in favour monopoly capital. A few examples will do here. State intervention favoured the 'Combine' in London by eliminating the competition of the 'independents' in the mid-1920's. More importantly, it prevented the London County Council from substituting buses for its large tram operations, thus preventing a much more serious competitor from entering the market. It favoured the big monopolies by eliminating methods by which small competitors could compete, albeit for safety reasons. Thus

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

hours were limited, Traffic Commissioners limited competition and favoured the largest operators, small operators had to prove their 'fitness' to be a licensed operator and so on. These rules were important for public safety and necessary to stem the rising rate of road accidents and to 'clean up' the image of the industry by eliminating such obviously dangerous practices as insufficient maintenance and the fuelling of petrol buses whilst loaded, nevertheless they operated in favour of monopoly capital.

State ownership of these monopolistic companies; the London Combine after 1933, Tillings after 1947 and B.E.T. after 1968; in no way altered the way in which these companies operated. The precise framework of nationalisation is discussed in more detail in later chapters. Nationalisation always favoured the existing shareholders in two ways. Firstly, the compensation paid was always generous, often too generous, considering the prospects of the industry. Secondly, the effect was to create a group of bondholders, who unlike private shareholders, were guaranteed a return on their capital, irrespective of the profitability of the industry. Between 1948 and 1962 the total operating deficit of the British Transport Commission was a mere £689,950. Interest on B.T.C. stock amounted to nearly £624 millions and total interest payments were just short of £957 millions. Special government payments, mostly to the railways, of £738 millions, were mainly a device not to invest in and modernise the railways but to protect the interests of the shareholders. Thus nationalisation operated entirely within the framework of capitalism.

It is interesting to note the fate of Tillings, one of the largest bus companies nationalised in 1947. According to Channon;

"Thomas Tilling...was a holding company moving slowly towards the model of the managed U.S. conglomerate. Tilling was originally engaged in bus transportation which was largely nationalized during the first postwar

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

Labour administration. Rather than repay all the shareholder's funds, the management decided to form an industrial holding company. During the 1950's, acquisitions were made in the areas of building products, glassware, textiles, insurance, light engineering, publishing, vehicle distribution and wholesaling.⁶²

These acquisitions, largely from `...owner entrepreneurs who wished to sell to avoid death duties..', and paid for by the receipts from nationalisation, made Tilling's the 40th. largest British company in sales terms by 1969/70. Over the whole of this period `...the original managements were left intact...' and only in the 1970's did Tilling's actually begin to challenge these companies independence and organise along multi-divisional lines. When Trotsky wrote `...the bourgeoisie will never allow themselves to be strangled by a Fabian banking transaction...' ⁶³ I doubt if even he foresaw just how favourable a Fabian banking transaction could be.

The third beneficiary of state intervention was undoubtedly the section of big business associated with the car. This section, identified by Glenn Yago as the `Corporate car complex' dominated both U.S. and German transport policy in much the same way as Bagwell and others have demonstrated the favourable treatment of the car and road lobby in Britain.⁶⁴ Yago sums up the process in the U.S.A. thus;

"Transport policy represents the profit-making and spatial-planning interests of particular large corporate interests...Because rail transit hindered expanded production in new industries and profit making in urban land and housing, corporations worked to supplant rail with motorisation policies. Although electrical transit was the climax of industrial growth associated with older industries (coal, steel, electrical machinery, etc.), it became an obstacle to the emerging of an ascendant faction of capital herein termed the corporate car complex. This new group worked to limit state transportation policy by its own investment and its influence on the emerging mass market economy, and by struggling against older corporate interests associated with rail transit. Having established its influence, corporate control over transportation policy was secured as corporate leaders and their allies took an active role in policymaking at the federal and state levels. In short,

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

the policy leading to transits decline was one that minimized public control over transportation programs and maximized corporate benefits." 65

Thus state intervention in the industry and transport policy in general favoured big business. The differences between monopoly capitalism and state capitalism were important but did not represent a major change in the industry. The profit motive, for example, was not subordinated to meeting public need. The major shift in state policy towards the industry in the 1960's came about because of increased competition from the car and increased costs due to traffic congestion which led to financial crisis in the industry. The impact of state ownership on the industry is dealt with in detail in the historical chapters of the thesis. Let us now turn our attention to the nature of mediation in the labour process.

2 : Mediation in the Labour Process

The first sign of collective resistance in the labour process is unionisation. Why do workers join unions? Richard Hyman, in his history of the Worker's Union, discusses this question at length. Uniting a structuralist and motivationalist analysis in discussing the labour unrest of 1910-14 he points to a critical additional factor; "...the catalyst within an increasingly volatile situation - ...the changing manner in which workers perceived their work situation.."⁶⁶ In other words within a given work situation there was a sudden change in perception. The unionisation of tram workers dates back to the new unionism of 1889 which marked a profound shift in attitudes among groups of workers previously regarded as unable to sustain union organisation. Bus workers in London, similarly in 1913, underwent a sea change in attitudes. The establishment of a core of union organisation on Manchester trams and London Buses was critical to the unionisation of the rest of the industry.

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

Unionisation is not necessarily linked directly to changes in the labour process. In particular technological determinatism is not a historically satisfactory explanation of unionisation. The electrification of trams, for example, had little significant impact on unionisation, indeed the union was under attack from the biggest private employer at the time and was in retreat. The mechanisation of London buses seemed to have the opposite effect. In both cases a sudden shift in consciousness rather than a change in the labour process was responsible. However this sudden shift in consciousness cannot be separated from changes in the labour process, themselves part of a long-term shift from competitive to monopoly and state monopoly capitalism. A mechanical theory in which change in the labour process causes resistance is inadequate. The process of causation will not work in the opposite direction either. The relationship between structural change and consciousness is necessarily dialectical, in other words structure and consciousness interact. Nevertheless consciousness is determined by structure, only when the labour process is organised in a certain way is it possible for resistance to develop.

Richard Price has attempted to unite resistance in the labour process and labour history. He laments;

"...that no attempt has been made to write a history of the shop stewards movement from its origins in the 1890's to the present day. Similarly, the continual tension between official labourism and the traditions of resistance to the capitalist control of the labour process has not been intergrated into the political history of the Labour Party..."⁶⁷

Price points out that recent debates in Labour history have centred on labour aristocracy, hegemony, culture and domination in which `...there is a growing tendency to elevate subordination as the core category of the analysis...' The lasting significance of the Thompson/Anderson & Nairn (the representatives of Althusser) debate was that Thompson won the battle but lost the war. Thus written out of the picture is class struggle, the

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

tenacious resistance, central to the accounts of political and economic policy-making by Pannitch, Middlemas and Hawkins, within the labour process. Real control, far from being a structural and technological determinant, exists only formally, in practice through informal organisation, control over overtime, restrictive practices and attempts to win job security, major areas of managerial control have been challenged, often successfully. 'The labour process, therefore, is above all a social process in which the technical characteristics of a particular work environment shape and condition the forms of struggle for authority and control'.

Consequently, Price argues, to understand labour action requires categories which capture the dynamic relationship between resistance and subordination. The instruments and techniques of subordination needs to be conceptualised not as structural determinants of the labour process but rather as contradictory. Subordination techniques are themselves shaped and modified by the resistance to them. Therefore we need to examine control as a shifting frontier between formal and real subordination which allows us to see crises in subordination, notably the 1830's and 1840's, the 1890's to 1926 and the late 1960's and 1970's. 'Under these circumstances, resistance to subordination...moves out of its local workshop environment to enter the wider dynamic of labour's history.'

Why, Price asks, has this resistance failed to lead to a coherent political presence? Not because of their marginality, nor the inevitable subordination of labour to capitalist control, nor to economism but mainly because these struggles lead to a shifting political consciousness. In some unofficial organisations, e.g. The South Wales Unofficial Reform Committee, we can detect '...pre-figurative, alternative forms of authority and hierarchy. Secondly we can note the continual, if incomplete, presence of notions of workers control. Thirdly, official labour party socialism has never been hegemonic. Yet despite this these '...shifting and frequently incoherent set of ideas has

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

never been able to translate into a full blown programme or ideology.

The fundamental reason, I would argue, why this has failed to happen, is to be found in the mediation process itself. Rank and file militancy, largely spontaneous in nature, has tended to either remain at a spontaneous level or to become incorporated into the official trade union machinery. Thus of the two big unofficial movements in London Transport; the 1930's movement ended in incorporation and ultimately defeat in an official strike; whereas the 1950's movement was never able to transform spontaneous industrial militancy into a permanent movement and was hampered by the inability to come to terms with the political constraints of nationalisation and transport policy which led ultimately to the defeat in 1958 despite official union support.

Thus this rank and file militancy, which Price regards as fundamental to an explanation of labour history, remained doubly subordinated. Firstly to the official machinery of the union which was by and large hostile to militancy, preferring to proceed by negotiation. Secondly to the political settlement in which the state, at local and national level, controlled the development of public transport. Despite increasing state ownership dating from municipalisation of trams at the turn of the century, the creation of London Transport in 1933 and nationalisation of most of the remainder of the industry in 1947 and 1968; state transport policy remained fundamentally committed to the market which left public transport competing unfavourably with the motor-car.

The two elements of this double subordination were not of equal importance; at the height of the economic power of the industry in the 1930's and 1940's the T.G.W.U. leadership of Bevin and Deakin were implacably hostile to rank and file militancy; as the industry began to decline in the 1950's the major impediment to better conditions was precisely the failure of nationalisation to address the problem of

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

decline. In the first period the actions of the union bureaucracy itself provides the major explanation of the failure of rank and file organisation, based on struggles over the terms and conditions of exploitation in the labour process, to reach beyond pre-figurative forms and to transform itself into a permanent independent opposition with a clear, coherent and alternative ideology. In the second period the major impediment to such a process was not so much the union leadership, but rather the failure to understand the limitations of wages militancy when faced with the political economy of public transport in decline. In other words, the militants reproduced the separation of economics and politics characteristic of the trade union bureaucracy.

Thus the nature of mediation between capital and labour, the concrete expression of resistance in the labour process, forms the core of the explanation of the subjective response to objective change in the labour process. In this part of the chapter we will examine this process of mediation further beginning with the contradictory nature of trades unions as organisations. The next section will examine the growth of a trade union bureaucracy. The third part will discuss some critiques of the 'rank and file' versus 'bureaucracy' type of analysis presented here. The fourth part discusses the interpretation and problems of measuring militancy. The final part will examine the theorisation of the relationship between trade unions and politics in particular the notions of 'corporatism' and 'political exchange'.

2a: Trade Unions as Contradictory Organisations.

Trade unions are contradictory in nature. Thus, as has been noted by, among others, Hyman and Kelly,⁶⁸ Marx had both an 'optimistic' and a 'pessimistic' attitude towards them. On the one hand '...in order to rightly appreciate the value of strikes and combinations, we must not allow

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

ourselves to be blinded by the apparent insignificance of their economical results, but hold, above all things, in view their moral and political consequences.. On the other `...Trade unions work well as centres of resistance against the encroachments of capital... They fail from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it...`⁶⁹

Unionisation as a form of resistance, is always pregnant with the threat that these organisations will go further than simple resistance. Thus syndicalist unions, of which the first London bus union was an example, go far beyond simple negotiations over the terms of exploitation. Thus Tom Mann, in the first issue of the `Industrial Syndicalist` wrote;

"...But what will have to be the essential conditions for the success of such a movement?

That it will be avowedly and clearly Revolutionary in aim and method.

Revolutionary in aim because it will be out for the abolition of the wages system and for securing to the workers the full fruits of their labour, thereby seeking to change the system of society from Capitalist to Socialist.

Revolutionary in method, because it will refuse to enter into any long-term agreements with the masters, whether with legal or State backing, or merely voluntarily; and because it will seize every chance of fighting for the general betterment - gaining ground and never losing any.

Does this mean we should become anti-political? Certainly not."⁷⁰

This is more than just an expression of simple resistance to capitalist domination of the labour process. It is in fact a declaration of war on the capitalist system as a whole.

Resistance within the labour process is an inadequate conceptualisation of this process, for resistance easily spills over to encompass a direct political challenge to the social relations of production. It is better conceptualised as labour militancy. In this context, Hobsbawms analysis of different types of unions; industrial, general and craft; is extremely important⁷¹. For different types of unions did not arise by accident. They are a direct result of a combination

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

of factors. The development of the labour process in certain industries made possible the establishment of permanent unions since labour could no longer easily be replaced. Labour militancy was an essential ingredient of the formation of general and industrial unions both in destroying the deferential behaviour of workers towards the employers⁷² and in forcing the employers to concede union recognition. The degree of indispensability in the labour process largely determines where general unions cease to be general, in terms of recruiting all possible sources of labour, and seek to be exclusive, in terms of controlling recruitment to certain occupations. The boundaries of general and industrial unions was determined by a combination of the nature of the labour process in the industries organised and by the nature of labour militancy.

Trade union structure is not simply the product of the division of labour. Trades unions are an important form of institutional mediation. They stand as an expression of a deeper class consciousness, as a representation of the deeper interests of social groups. At least this has been a prevailing view amongst both conservative and marxist labour historians, as Zeitlin has pointed out.⁷³ As Hyman comments;

"Union structure is not a fixed phenomenon but a process, the historical outcome of the interdependent but not purposefully integrated strategies of a variety of fragmented employee groups. Throughout the process of structural development, two contradictory forces have operated: on the one hand towards breadth, unity and solidarity; on the other towards parochialism, sectionalism and exclusiveness... the two extremes... are abstractions, scarcely ever met in pure form in the real world."⁷⁴

The development of the T.G.W.U. and its forerunners can be seen in this light. The A.A.T. (Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen) was a product of the new unionism of 1889. The L.P.U. (London Licensed Passenger Vehicle Workers Union) was a product of the 'great unrest' of 1910 to 1914. These

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

two explosions were marked by a growth in breadth, unity and solidarity. In between was a period that Hobsbawm terms '...cautious, limited, conservative 'sectional' unionism...'⁷⁵ The new general unions, as Richard Hyman describes, were able to grow both vertically and horizontally in part because of their socialist leadership, Tom Mann and Will Thorne spring to mind, but equally Bevin's early radicalism, though overshadowed by his later career, should not be forgotten. Yet these new unions did not fundamentally restructure trade unions into industrial or general unions, rather they filled in the gaps left by the exclusivity of the older craft unions. As Hyman comments, '...even the most expansionist of the new unions were essentially residual in their recruitment patterns..'⁷⁶

But the A.A.T. and L.P.U. contradict this pattern. On the one hand they were occupationally specific and were able to create a stronghold of unionism isolated from the general labour market. On the other hand there was always the fear of the unorganised which propelled even the more cautious A.A.T. into the National Transport Workers Federation. The significance of the amalgamation was to create an impregnable obstacle to industrial unionism but one which was dressed up in the language of syndicalism as 'One Big Union'. The T.G.W.U. was essentially a federation of unions which on account of its structure needed an extremely strong centralised leadership. The immense power of Ernest Bevin was in inverse proportion to the weakness and sectionalism that prevailed inside the union.

The greater the T.G.W.U. grew, the more sectional it became. Apart from the special circumstances of the General Strike, the union has never called a strike of its entire membership. General unions of the semi-skilled and unskilled need to organise as broadly as possible in order to weaken the threat from the unorganised, but the more they do so the weaker they become. As Trotsky wrote;

"The trade union embraces the broad masses of workers, at different levels. The broader these masses, the closer is the trade union to accomplishing its task. But what the organisation gains in breadth it

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

inevitably loses in depth...the weak side of the unions thus comes from their strong side."⁷⁷

The union embraced a huge and diverse range of occupations, interests and loyalties, with great variations in strength and militancy between the different sections. This led to huge organisational strains, including the threat of breakaway groups which were contained by a mixture of federalism, the organisation of union sections by trade groups, on the one hand, and a steady concentration of power in the leadership, on the other hand.

This overall weakness was reflected inversely in the internal structure of the union. Richard Hyman writes;

"The government of such unions has been given the colourful label 'popular bossdom': the power of the key leaders within the formal machinery of union decision making is firmly entrenched, and this dominance they seek to legitimise by cultivating the personal identification and loyalty of the members...The ratio of full-time officials to members is high, and (with the exception of the General Secretary) they are appointed rather than elected. Mechanisms of upward control are limited in significance. National conferences are too large and too short to provide any systematic initiation of policy; in general their proceedings can be readily manipulated by the leadership platform. Elections are confined to the choice of General Secretary and lay officers and committees at the various levels of union government. In practice the lay Executive of the TGWU, in principle the sovereign body, is normally dominated by the General Secretary. Moreover, he can virtually appoint his own successor, since the tradition has become established that his deputy becomes the generally recognised heir-apparent."⁷⁸

The system of leadership and leadership succession in the T.G.W.U. is of crucial importance in understanding the 'public face' of the union and its impact on the Labour Party. Bevin's career;

"...from its Marxian social-democratic origins in Bristol, through its period of active industrial agitation, to success..as the far from radical boss of the largest union in the country and finally into the Cabinet as Foreign Secretary.."

followed a path from extreme left to become a '...pillar of conservatism..⁷⁹ His successor Arthur Deakin took up the trajectory where Bevin left off. His successor Jock Tiffin

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

would have continued in Deakin's shoes but dropped dead suddenly before the succession could be fixed. From that point on the union became the preserve of the left. Frank Cousins was followed by Jack Jones, Moss Evans and finally Ron Todd. The first three were well to the right of the membership, the last four generally to the left. The next section examines some explanations for this development.

2b : The Bureaucratisation of the T.G.W.U.

Unions because of their situation as mediations between the capital-labour relation are internally contradictory. On the one hand they tend to be rooted in labour militancy which goes beyond a simple desire to negotiate the terms and conditions of exploitation, on the other hand, the leadership of unions is forced to do just this. Richard Hyman has written extensively on this process of separation of interests between union officials and members.⁸⁰ Typically, this divorce between the leadership and the membership has been grounded in three factors. Firstly the organisational conservatism of the trade union leadership, based largely on the Webb's analysis of the 'civil service of the trade union world'.⁸¹ Secondly the necessarily conservative impact of trade union practice. Negotiating with the employers encourages the leadership to 'see both sides' and to regard strikes as an intrusion on the orderly maintenance and conduct of agreements. Thirdly there is the connection between the ameliorative action of trade unions on the industrial front and reformist political parties on the political front, which progressively imbues trade union officials with notions of gradualism, caution and piecemeal reform.⁸²

In their 'History of Trade Unionism', the Webbs explained that '...the actual government of the trade union world rests exclusively in the hands of a class apart, the salaried officers of the great societies.'⁸³ They continue in the same vein to explain how his (and they were usually

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

male) wages become no longer tied to his those of his members. His sympathies with the privations and subjections of the life of his members fades. He gradually takes on middle class values, goes to live in a middle class area and adopts a middle class lifestyle and friends. Finally, when a strike disrupts and threatens his new existence he becomes prepared to compromise in order to settle a dispute even on terms distasteful to his members. The Webbs were enthusiastic about this, however their parody of the process of corruption should not be mistaken for an explanation of it. For beneath it lies a much more complex process which goes beyond the individual character and reveals powerful forces which operate on officials on account of their position as mediators between capital and labour. Mediators precisely because they are a 'class apart'.

Müller-Jensch, in a paper⁸⁴ from which much of the following is derived, describes the structural trends which transforms unions from oppositional to mediating organisations. Firstly rapid technological change, the increase in scientific management, in short the change from competitive to monopoly capitalism (although not described in such terms by the author) leads to a change in unions from craft to general and industrial unions. Expansion and concentration of union organisation goes hand in hand with the centralisation of decision making and the increase in the number of full-time officials who become professionalised. 'Internal solidarity began to slacken and a gap opened up between specific organisational (secondary) goals and membership interests'. This process has been largely described already.

Secondly these developments entailed changes in union policy. Unions organising larger and more heterogenous groups sought common denominators in bargaining policies relegating qualitative demands in favour of quantitative demands and replacing sectional by common interests. The 'friendly society' function declined as these functions were taken over by the state. Also the organisational objectives of the full-time officials, in addition to bargaining,

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

increasingly focused on preservation and growth of the union, if necessary, at the expense of sections of the membership. For the first time a gulf opened up between the rank and file and the officials. The division between union officials engaged in company wide or national bargaining and the plant or garage based organisation of shop stewards responsible for sustaining membership and recruitment gives local organisation some autonomy and the possibility of unofficial organisational sanctions against the leadership, a process that will be described in the next part of this chapter.

Union officials, particularly at national level, developed a quite separate set of organisational goals which diverged radically from the goals of the membership. This process of goal displacement led to the gradual elevation of the internal interests of the organisation above the interests of the membership. However there were limits to this process, since recruitment and union growth depended on meeting at least some of the aspirations of the membership. The key concessions, from the officials point of view, were those which increased the range of conditions covered by national bargaining, and consequently increased the power of officials within that bargaining process, rather than the conditions themselves.

According to Müller-Jentsch;

"...collective bargaining is a central integrating mechanism of capitalist society in that it seeks to divorce economic from political struggles and to channel class conflict into conflicts of interest with pragmatic outcomes..."

All collective bargaining has this character. As collective bargaining moves from the single workshop, plant or garage level to multi-plant, regional or national level; this divorce of the economic from the political aspect of bargaining takes on new forms. The union branch comes more and more to discuss economic issues in pragmatic terms, or particular issues relating to control over the labour process at the immediate level, these issues are separated from their political content. Thus the branch may demand the

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

right to co-determine schedules but they rarely demand workers control of industry. They may demand more money but not in the context of a redivision of wealth between classes.

On the other hand, union officials, especially national officials, become more and more political. The key questions for them are questions of political control over the labour process; hence policies of municipalisation, nationalisation and state regulation of hours and conditions together with the creation of bargaining institutions which cover larger and larger areas of the labour process. In other words the divorce of the political and the economic is not simply the depoliticisation of bargaining but rather an economism at branch level and a politicisation of the union leadership.

The shift of collective bargaining away from the branch to national institutions has several preconditions. Firstly employers have to be either organised into associations or there must be more or less monopoly ownership. Secondly unions themselves have to be centralised or at least organised into federations or associations. Both employers associations and unions have to be able to enforce the agreements, employers associations on all employers and unions on employees. Institutionalised bargaining is usually associated with a monopoly structure of ownership, as in B.E.T. and Tillings or the association of non-competitive employers, such as municipalities. Where the union is more centralised than the employers, as in road haulage between the wars, national bargaining seldom works.

The setting up of a National Joint Negotiating Committee (NJIC), covering the tram industry, had a crucial impact on union structure. It increased the power of national officials concentrating power at the centre at the expense of both local officials and the membership. This centralisation undermines the democratic forms of union decision making so that the content of this decision making process contradicts the forms of democracy. Thus despite the importance of committees of lay members at every level

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

within the structure of the T.G.W.U., their actual influence declines. Thus for example, wage offers are discussed by delegate conferences; but these conferences only vote on whether to accept or reject the outcome of negotiations, not on the conduct of these negotiations. Delegate bodies cease to be representative and their composition can frequently be manipulated to the advantage of the national officials. National officials can also use the procedure of the union to delay the forwarding of wage claims which do not meet with their approval. For example in the 1950's wage claims from the London Central Bus Delegate Conference could take six months to be approved by the National Passenger Workers Trade Group Committee suggesting that union procedure was an important method of dissipating militancy.

Thus the increase in size and power of trade unions is accompanied by an increase in the power of officials over their members. It was of course Michels who first theorised this process in his iron law of oligarchy, and Goldstein who attempted to apply this theory to the T.G.W.U.⁸⁵ However, as Hyman correctly points out, this is only a tendency, and studies like Goldstein's that concentrate on formal structures and processes tend to overlook the equally strong countervailing tendency which is for pressure from the membership to impose limits on this tendency and if necessary ignore and repudiate union agreements signed in their name. Arthur Deakin was the apotheosis of this process of centralisation of control within the union; the reaction to it was widespread unofficial strikes amongst dockers and busworkers and the formation of breakaway unions. In other words local branch organisation acts as a counterweight to increasing centralisation. A point further underlined by John Hemmingway's study of Brigend Busmen.⁸⁶

2c :In Defence of Rankand File Explanations.

The concept of inner union conflict between trade union leaders and their members as the most fundamental division within trade unions has gained ground since the late 1960's

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

among both labour historians and industrial relations theorists. Encouraged by the contemporary ferment in industrial relations, Hinton, Hyman and Price⁸⁷ in particular have contributed to this approach. In recent years there has been a reaction to this, Kelly for example suggests that equally important are the divisions within the trade union bureaucracy between 'left-wing' and 'right-wing' union leaders, a suggestion given further consideration below.

Zeitlin goes still further. He asks;

"Was the central focus of industrial relations a spontaneous struggle for control of the labour process which pitted rank-and-file workers against trade unions as well as their employers? Or were institutional job controls enforced by national trade unions the key constraint on managerial prerogatives on the shop floor?"⁸⁸

The problem with this formulation is the assumption that these two processes are mutually exclusive whereas the history of industrial relations in the bus industry suggests that these processes are mutually reinforcing. Both sets of national negotiating machinery in the bus industry, the N.J.I.C. and the N.C.O.I., only began to discuss substantive issues under pressure from unofficial strikes. The controls enforced by national trade unions and reluctantly conceded by employers are intimately connected with periods of rank and file revolt to which the reaction of the union leadership may well be ambivalent. Zeitlin fails to situate the rank and file versus bureaucracy contradiction within the more fundamental capital-wage labour contradiction.

Zeitlin raises a further objection concerning the way in which both marxists and the 'institutionalists' (Fox, Flanders, the Webbs, Clegg et. al.) explain the development of labour institutions '...by reference to the objective interests of social groups generated by the wider structure of modern society..' He objects to such explanations on three grounds. Firstly that social groups such as the working class are intellectual constructs rather than the '...objective building blocks of modern society..' Secondly that '...objective interests cannot be imputed to social

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

actors without reference to either to their conscious interpretations or to some specific context... Thirdly that '...institutions do not stand in a fixed relationship to particular interests...' In short there is no objectively defined working class with specific interests which exist independently of social actors conscious interpretations or contexts and there can be no fixed relationship between trades unions and their members or between the bureaucracy and the rank and file. In one sense this is a healthy reaction against the mechanical relationship between objective class position and consciousness so often posed. However Zeitlin's solution, simply dissolves the objective pole of this contradiction altogether leading once more to the realms of subjectivity and voluntarism.

By way of contrast, Allen, in his 'Sociology of Trade Unionism'⁸⁹, sums up the nature of trade union officials;

"The role of a union official is set so that the behaviour of any person who becomes an official is almost entirely predictable. The only significant variations which occur are those which exist within the hierarchy of roles in a union. If a person moves from being a local to a national official then different behaviour will be expected of him. The dominance of the role over the individual explains why the union behaviour of communist and anti-communist officials varies so little; why, in other words, there is continuity of activities despite marked changes of personnel."

This is almost a mirror image of Zeitlin's subjectivism and creates analytical problems when dealing with, for example, the change of leadership in the T.G.W.U. from Deakin to Cousins. For Zeitlin it would be of fundamental importance, for Allen it could have no meaning whatever, both fail to grasp the contradictory nature of trade union officials which is the essence of the rank and file versus bureaucracy distinction.

However there is a need for some caution in the use of the terms rank and file and bureaucracy as Hyman has pointed out;

"The term 'rank and file' is a military metaphor without theoretical content: as employed on the Left it has often involved a romantic and idealised conception of workplace action and shop steward militancy, an

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

assumption that workers are held back from anti-capitalist struggle only by the machinations of a corrupt and reactionary leadership. The notion of 'trade union bureaucracy' - a familiar slogan since the foundation of the Comintern - is itself theoretically flaccid. Where does the rank and file end and the bureaucracy begin? In British trade unions, the vast bulk of administrative and representative functions are performed by 'lay' branch and workplace officers rather than full-time officials..." 90

Presented as a crude dichotomy the distinction is indeed worthless. 'Rank and file' as used here describes not a military phenomenon but rather unofficial union organisations which in many cases referred to themselves as rank and file. Equally the 'bureaucracy' is by no means assumed always to be reactionary, in fact from 1956 onwards the leadership of the T.G.W.U. has probably been to the left of the majority of the membership.

The key distinctions to be drawn between the two groups is in terms of differing interests as outlined previously in the discussion of union leadership and in the contradictory nature of unions themselves. Rank and file organisations are qualitatively different. Their leaders are ordinary workers and are accountable on a day to day basis to the membership. They are not bound by the formalism and legalism of established union leaders. Their power and strength lies in their ability to involve thousands of workers in day to day decisions which are normally taken in small committees in isolation from the membership. However rank and file organisations only represent a partial breakdown of that dominance for several reasons. Just as trade unions are structured by their contradictory position inside capitalism, so are rank and file organisations if they merely seek to usurp the role of trade unions, albeit in a more militant form. Equally, they are still likely to be dominated by the politics of labourism, although of a more radical variety than their union leaders. Consequently, although exerting strong pressure on trade union machinery in a more militant direction, that militancy may remain trapped inside the structure of trade union organisation and politics.

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

Nevertheless the concrete expression of these different interests has a rich and varied empirical reality. Rank and File groups themselves are subject to sectionalism, particularism and bureaucratisation. Unofficial strikes can be reactionary. District Committees and even lower level full time officials can support unofficial and unconstitutional strikes against the national leadership. Shop stewards and stewards committees can side with the national leadership against their own members. The distinction between rank and file and bureaucracy refers, thus, not to a crude dichotomy but a relationship of opposing forces in which the 'middle layers'; shop stewards, lay officials and District and Trade Group Committee members; are pulled in opposing directions.

This distinction between the interests of the rank and file and the bureaucracy is more fundamental than divisions within the bureaucracy itself. Even the most left-wing officials, of whom Harold Clay and Frank Cousins are prime examples in this study, have more in common with their right-wing counterparts like John Cliff and Arthur Deakin, in terms of behaviour, than with any unofficial or rank and file grouping in the union. The actions of the bureaucracy are well documented whereas the actions of rank and file members are not. How can their ability to act independently of union officials be measured in a sociological meaningful way? This problem is addressed in the next part of the chapter.

2d : The Measurement of Rank and File Militancy

The most important indicator of the attitudes, feelings, beliefs, in short; consciousness, of rank and file workers, not to mention the most visible, is when this consciousness is translated into strike activity. Why should strikes be given such a degree of importance? James Cronin puts forward two essential reasons. Firstly;

"...strikes are...the means of communication and sources of political and economic leverage most readily available to industrial workers, and as such do yeoman

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

service as flexible tools, reflecting the changing and often increasing desires and organisational capacities of the working class. Most strikes are essentially creative acts of an offensive kind, signs not of weakness but of collective resources, not of resignation but of an often hopeful and heightened sense of self-worth, raised within a context of institutionalised inferiority."⁹¹

In other words, strikes are a positive and creative phenomena, they are not the product of a pathological social structure, or a dysfunction in industrial conciliation and arbitration machinery, they are the product of confidence and a heightened sense of collectivity.

Secondly they are an extremely significant form of social action;

"...since 1870 strikes have involved more workers in a more meaningful way than any other form of social and political action, particularly during the present century. Compare, for example, the number of workers who strike in a given year with even the most generous estimate of those who take part in the activities of the local Labour party or trade union branch...only voting touches greater numbers of workers, yet who would argue that the commitment involved in casting a ballot is equal to that entailed in deciding to strike?"

Thus for Cronin, strike action is the most significant form of social action and the record of strikes the critical source available for reconstructing the social history of the working class.

However quantitative statistics on strike action by themselves are insufficient. There needs also to be a qualitative measurement of strike activity. Cronin is rightly critical of the assumption that there is a mechanical relationship between strikes and consciousness for this leaves out of account the nature of the strikes, whether offensive or defensive. In criticising another model he states that; "...by leaving out the subjective dimension, they telescope and oversimplify the complicated process by which the structural features of industrial society come to inform collective action."

This process, according to Cronin, is one in which

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

each different stage of economic growth alters consciousness, stimulates organisation and promotes strike waves, through the mechanism of inter-generational differences among the working class. Younger militants act as;

"...carriers of the new attitudes and orientations are younger generations and before organisational forms adapt to changed circumstances, internecine battles must be fought and resolved...for much of the history of labour in Britain a rendering of its internal squabbles will be equivalent to a record of the confrontations of succeeding generations of workers and of the influence that changing economic parameters exert on trade union policy and structure."⁹²

Consciousness, in this model, is a mediating process in which accumulates quantitative changes in experience which in turn suddenly become qualitative, resulting in massive explosions of militancy, impacting on existing trade union structure and organisation. Thus every so often in British labour history there is an eruption of militancy which recasts trade union policy and structure, an eruption in which quantitative changes in strike activity translate into qualitative changes in organisation and consciousness. The development of permanent unofficial organisations gives us our final method of measuring rank and file activity both quantitatively in terms of votes or branches supporting resolutions, the circulation of newspapers and other publications and qualitatively in terms of ability to lead independently of the union leadership.

2e : Trade Unions and Politics.

Thus far, we have pointed to two major features of the pattern of trade union development. The growth of a strong, centralised trade union bureaucracy on the one hand, and the development of labour militancy and even rank and file organisation on the other. Clearly each development profoundly influences and places limits on the behaviour of the other. They are not separated either historically or actually, the division between the two is not fixed or

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

absolute but shifts according to the pattern of events. The trade union bureaucracy tends towards a permanent political relationship with the Labour Party, which was historically in Britain, its own creation. Rank and file militants have shifting allegiances, sometimes to the Labour Party, sometimes the Communist Party, sometimes other organisations and sometimes no political organisation at all. Several theorists have attempted to create a theoretical framework for understanding the political dimension of the trade union bureaucracy which we shall discuss here.

Muller-Jentsch considers this relationship as a process of 'political exchange' whereby trade union leaders restrict the scope of union activity in return for favourable legislation. This concept would seem to apply to the behaviour of, for example, the leadership of the Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen, who at the local level, saw municipal reform as the best means of trade union advance. At national level this leads directly to opportunism, as Offe and Wiesenhal suggest;

"...Opportunism includes the tendency toward an exclusive orientation of the working class movement toward established and recognised channels of political action, a tendency towards an exclusive reliance upon parliamentary and electoral forms of struggle within the working class movement, the acceptance of the 'division of labour' between economic and political struggles as it became manifest in the proclamation of the 'independence' of unions from the Socialist Party, a strategic self-limitation of the means and forms of struggle and thus, to put it most abstractly, an interruption of the dialectic of means and ends and the resulting reification of means, which are henceforth to be considered as ends in themselves."⁹³

This formulation, which whilst describing the pressures on the trade union bureaucracy towards such strategic self-limitation is also misleading if it is taken to suggest the inevitability of such a process. Because such a tendency is merely one side of a more complex process.

Richard Hyman suggests that much Marxist writing on trade unionism tends towards either this formulation or towards the opposite;

"Either overwhelming weight is placed on the determinant effect of the logic of capitalist

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

development, depicting as inevitable and uncontradictory, the subordination of the working class to bourgeois hegemony and the integration of working class organisations within the priorities of the capitalist state. Or else the contradictions within capitalism are treated as a source of almost unqualified openness for working-class collective action, spontaneous worker resistance to capital being viewed as a virtually undetermined agency of economic and political instability and transformation. The one approach effectively denies the potential or significance of conscious human (and specifically working-class) practice in the face of the structural determinations of capital; while in the other scope for working-class creativity is treated as unlimited regardless of the material content."⁹⁴

This would suggest that the pressures towards subordination or incorporation of the trade union bureaucracy are one side of a complex dialectical relationship between the trade union bureaucracy and the rank and file. This is also the substance of Richard Price's critique of the elevation of subordination as the dominant theme in labour history.⁹⁵ One particular attempt to clear up this confusion is by Leo Panitch in his writings on corporatism. However corporatism is itself a confusing concept.

Corporatism has been used in three different ways within Marxist theory, according to Panitch. Firstly as a Gramscian notion of an ideological condition of the working classes. Secondly as a political structure exclusive to fascist regimes or finally as a false ideological construct. Panitch suggests as a minimum definition;

"A political structure within advanced capitalism which integrates organised socio-economic producer groups through a system of representation and cooperative mutual interaction at leadership level and mobilisation and social control at the mass level."⁹⁶

This sort of abstract definition tends to create as many problems as it solves, as Panitch himself reflected.⁹⁷ What Panitch has in mind as the foundation of the political structure of corporatism is;

"...in particular, the national economic planning and incomes policy bodies which have proliferated in Europe since the end of the Second World War."⁹⁸

To these could be added national industrial wage bargaining systems promoted by the state, the involvement of trade union leaders in tri-partite advisory bodies and the

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

nomination of trade union officials to posts on the boards of nationalised industries, advisory committees of government departments and Royal Commissions.

However this very wide definition of corporatism tends to confuse rather than clarify. For example could Deakin's right-wing leadership of the T.G.W.U. from 1940-55 be explained as a consequence of this new and closer cooperation, incorporation or integration into the apparatus of the state? If such an explanation is advanced then it immediately raises the question of why Cousins, leader of the same union from 1955 to 1964, whilst maintaining every aspect of this corporatist relationship, refused in return to accept income controls and campaigned vigorously against nuclear defence policy. Clearly other explanations are required which leads to the conclusion that the wider the definition of corporatism is extended, the more theoretically flaccid it becomes.

Panitch, himself, avoids this problem by restricting discussion of corporatism to the incorporation of the top layer of trade union officials into systems of indicative planning and economic strategy under Labour (or in European terms Social-Democratic) governments, namely from 1964-70 and 1974-9. In return the union leadership responded by supporting, either openly or in Cousins' case tacitly, incomes policies. It was this support which created a crisis in social democracy precisely because trade union leaders are not simply free agents but are forced to take into account their own membership. Equally the left-wing of the Labour Party was placed under enormous pressure from their own political networks through which they mobilised support, to oppose legal restraints on trade union immunities.⁹⁹ The strength of Panitch's analysis of these periods is that he unites a discussion of the internal politics of the union movement and of the Labour Party within the general framework of mounting economic and political crisis which both Labour Governments faced.

It is this type of analysis, which links together both

The Labour Process and Labour Politics

the internal and external pressures from which emerge trade union political strategy, that is favoured here. Thus the 'logic of capital' type analysis of Müller-Jentsch and Offe and Wiesenthal is rejected in favour of a more complex relationship between trade unions and politics which takes into account the dialectical relationship between subordination and resistance which centres on the relationship between the trade union bureaucracy and the rank and file which itself is structured but not determined by the labour process. Let us now look at the labour process in the bus and tram industry in more detail.

Notes - Labour Process...

1. "Labour and Monopoly Capital" - Harry Braverman, Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974.

2. "Theory in Industrial Relations - Towards a Materialist Analysis" - R. Hyman in 'Industrial Relations in a Cold Climate' p. 138. Macmillan, London, 1989.

3. For example see "The Forward March of Labour Halted?" - Eric Hobsbawm, Verso, London, 1981. Or Ivor Crewes analyses of Labour's election defeats; 'The Disturbing Truth Behind Labour's Rout' - The Guardian, 13th. June, 1983 and 'Election '87: The Aftermath' - The Guardian, 16th. June, 1987. And 'Crawling from the Wreckage' - Andrew Gamble, Marxism Today, July 1987. The debate has continued into the terrain of 'Post-Fordism'. See Stuart Hall 'New Times' and Robin Murray 'Life After Henry Ford' in Marxism Today, October 1988. There is also the much more serious work of David Lockwood, John Goldthorpe, Eric Olin Wright, Andre Gorz, Bary Hindess, John Westergaard, J. & B. Ehrenreich etc.

4. "The Nature of Work" - Paul Thompson, MacMillan, London, 1983, pp. 72-3.

5. Braverman pp. 443-4.

6. Ibid. pp. 429-30.

7. This idea of social deskilling should not be confused with the concept of relative deskilling as used by Andrew Zimbalist;

"There is a long-run tendency through fragmentation, rationalization and mechanization for workers and their jobs to become deskilled, both in an absolute sense (they lose craft and traditional abilities) and in a relative one (scientific knowledge progressively accumulates in the production process."

Zimbalist also quotes Braverman "...The more science is incorporated into the labor process, the less the worker understands of this process.." (Labour & Monopoly Capital p. 425)

This notion of relative deskilling could certainly be applied in the case of the vehicles themselves, for example on the older crew type buses, driving controls were simple mechanical devices which in the case of a fault would probably allow the vehicle to be 'nursed' back to the depot. Buses designed for one-person operation tend to have pneumatic controls which simply fail. The increasingly more complex control systems; semi-automatic or automatic clutch, brake and accelerator; doors moved by compressed air, computerised destination signs, motors attached to ticket machines (often of a design never intended to be power driven) and so on; are all beyond the knowledge of most drivers. This was not the case fifty or even twenty years ago.

See "Case Studies in the Labor Process" - Edited Andrew Zimbalist, Monthly Review Press, London, 1979.

8. Although there has always been a difference between the two wages, this has tended in general to get smaller over time. The difference in average earnings may be smaller still because conductors are less limited in overtime since

Notes - Labour Process...

fewer legal restrictions on hours exist.

9. Ken Fuller, the title of whose book about London Busworkers; 'Radical Aristocrats' might suggest that bus work was highly skilled, is quite clear on this point;

"This 'aristocracy' (skilled engineering workers) was characterised by long apprenticeships, regulation of work upon which each man could be employed and other practices which, by restricting entry into these occupations... kept wages as high as possible. London busworkers were obviously not skilled in this sense."

"Radical Aristocrats : London Busworkers from the 1880's to the 1980's" - Ken Fuller, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1985. p. 13.

10. "Bravermania and Beyond" - Craig Littler and Graeme Salaman, in 'Sociology 16, May 2cd. 1982.

11. "Social Relations of Production at the Point of Production" - Richard Edwards on 'Insurgent Sociologist' 8, nos. 2-3, p.109. Quoted in "Bureaucracy and the Labour Process" - Dan Clawson, Monthly Review Press, London, 1980. pp. 31-2.

12. "The Development of the Labour Process in Capitalist Societies" - Craig R. Littler, Heinemann, London, 1982. pp.27-8.

13. "The New Labour Outlook" - Robert Williams, Leonard Parsons, London, 1921. pp. 8-10.

14. Braverman gives the following example;

"Absenteeism has risen sharply...It has reached the point where an average of 5% of General Motors' hourly workers are missing from work without explanation every day...On some days, notably Fridays and Mondays the figure goes as high as 10%...The quit rate at Ford last year was 25.2%...Some assembly-line workers are so turned off, managers report with astonishment, that they just walk away in mid-shift and don't even come back to get their pay for the time they have worked." (From 'Fortune' 1970 quoted op. cit. p. 27.)

15. Ibid. pp. 31-37.

16. "Management's Redesign of Work: Labour Process, Labour Markets and Product Markets" - John Kelly in 'Job Design: Critical Perspectives on the Labour Process' - Edited by David Knights, Hugh Wilmott and David Collinson, Gower, Aldershot, 1985. See p. 31.

It is slightly amusing in this context to note that Kelly's case study considers the domestic electrical appliance branch of the electrical engineering sector whose workers, we are told(!), '...do not fit the image of a militant discontented workforce generating a problem of motivation, or control.' (p.34) Thus Kelly accuses Braverman of underestimating the role of class struggle in shaping the labour process in order to carry out a study where class struggle plays no role at all.

17. "The Making of the English Working Class" - E.P. Thompson, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1968 pp. 9-10.

18. Littler (1982) op. cit. p. 22.

19. "Grundrisse" - Marx, Harmondsworth, 1973. pp. 693-4.

20. "Braverman, Capital Accumulation and Deskilling" - Tony

Notes - Labour Process...

- Elger, in 'The Degradation of Work?' - Edited by Stephen Wood, Hutchinson, London, 1982. See p. 23.
21. Ibid. pp. 28-9.
 22. Littler (1982) op. cit. see Chapter Eight.
 23. "The Making of Marx's Capital" - Roman Rosdolsky - (1st published in German 1967), Pluto Press, 1977, London. See Chapter Two especially pages 26-7.
 24. "Grundrisse" op. cit. p.100.
 25. "Essays on Marx's Theory of Value" - Isaac I. Rubin, Black Rose Books, Montreal, 1973 (A translation of the 1928 edition.) pp. 61-2.
 26. "Grundrisse" op. cit. p.449.
 27. "The Nature of Work" op. cit. pp. 130-1.
 28. Littler (1982) op. cit. pp. 33-4.
 29. Rosdolsky p. 42 quoting from the Grundrisse pp. 650-1.
 30. P. Armstrong p. 146.
 31. Ibid.
 32. Littler op. cit. p. 34.
 33. "Living with Capitalism" - T. Nichols and H. Beynon, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1977. pp. 109-110.
 34. "Labouring Men" - E. Hobsbawm, Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1964. p. 166.
 35. Ibid. p. 170.
 36. "Skilled Manual Workers in the Labour Process, 1856-1964" - R. Penn in "The Degredation of Work?" - Ed. Stephen Wood, Hutchinson, London. 1982.
 37. Armstrong op. cit. p. 154.
 38. 'Capital' - K. Marx, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1964. Volume 1. p. 451.
 39. Ibid. p. 448.
 40. Ibid. p. 450.
 41. Littler (1982) op. cit. p. 32. See also "Voting for Ford : Industrial Democracy and the Control of Labour" - P. Cressey and J. MacInnes, Capital and Class, 11, p. 14.
 42. "The Politics of Production" - Michael Burawoy, Verso, London 1985. p. 11.
 43. Ibid. p. 39.
 44. "The Nature of Work" - Paul Thompson, MacMillan, London, 1983. p. 152.
 45. 'Capital' Volume 1 p. 548.
 46. R. Williams op. cit. p. 9.
 47. Can the labour process in the road passenger transport industry be transformed beyond the Scientific-Technical Revolution? Some labour process writers have suggested the existence of a further stage in the transformation of the labour process; 'Fordism'. (See for example "The Theory of Capitalist Regulation" - P. Aglietta, New Left Books, London, 1979 and "The Labour Process from Fordism to Neo-Fordism" - Palloix, Conference of Socialist Economists, 1976.) In the former the whole production process is redesigned to ensure a continuous flow of work with each process simplified and fragmented such that each worker produces a few repetitive actions. The result is almost, but not quite, an automatic process of production. This may well be the future of urban public transport if developments such

Notes - Labour Process...

as the Docklands Light Railway, where the speed of the train is no longer controlled by the train crew, become dominant. Clearly such a process requires that public transport be segregated from other traffic. In the last few years a number of light railway schemes have been proposed which could achieve just this.

48. "Contested Terrain" - Richard Edwards, Heineman, London, 1979. pp. 25-6.

49. "The British Worker Question" - Theo Nichols, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1986 p. 149.

50. See Kelly {Management's redesign of work!} op. cit.

51. "The Visible Hand : The Managerial Revolution in American Business" - Alfred D. Chandler Jr. - Havard University Press, London 1977. p. 87.

52. Ibid. p. 120.

53. Ibid. p. 121.

54. Ibid pp. 167-171. For example in 1891 the Pennsylvania employed 110,000 workers, the U.S. Armed Forces 39,492. In the same year the national debt was \$997 millions, the capitalization of the Pennsylvania was \$842 millions. The total receipts of the railway were \$135.1 million, total federal revenue was \$385.8 million.

55. Zeitlin J. - "From Labour History to the History of Industrial Relations" in Economic History Review, 2cd. Series XL, 2 (1987), pp. 159-184.

56. See the discussion in Chapter Six of Chandler.

57. "Labouring Men" op. cit. p.257.

58. "Crossville - The Sowing and the Harvest" - W.J. Crosland-Taylor, Liverpool, 1948. p. 54.

59. Ibid. pp. 203-4.

60. There is no space here to assess Marx and Weber's different views of bureaucracy. Suffice it to say that Weber regards bureaucracy as a supra-historical, technological imperative whereas Marx stresses its hierarchical nature and its close connection with the state. The simplest discussion in Weber can be found in Gerth & Wright Mills op. cit. pp. 196-244. For Marx, the best account is Hal Draper's "Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution" op. cit. Volume One 'State and Bureaucracy' see especially Chapter Twenty. The quote is from Draper p. 485.

61. "The Railwaymen - The History of the N.U.R." - P.S. Bagwell, George Allen & Unwin, London, 1982. Volume 2, p. 6.

62. "The Strategy and Structure of British Enterprise" - D.F. Channon, Macmillan, London, 1973. See pp. 52-63 and p.191.

63. "Where is Britain Going?" - L.D. Trotsky in "Trotsky's Writings on Britain" Volume 2, New Park Publications, London, 1974. p. 121.

64. See "The Decline of Transit: Urban Transportation in German and U.S. Cities, 1900-1970" - Glenn Yago, Cambridge University Press, 1984. For Britain see "The Transport Revolution" - Philip Bagwell, B.T. Batsford, London, 1974 & "The End of the Line" - Philip Bagwell, Verso, London, 1984.

65. Yago pp. 75-6.

66. "The Worker's Union" - Richard Hyman, Clarendon Press,

Notes - Labour Process...

Oxford, 1971. pp. 182-195.

67. Presented here are the main points of an article by Richard Price, which seems to me to capture his main argument. Elsewhere we refer to other articles and particularly his book "Labour in British Society" which attempts to carry out a historical survey of the relation between the labour process and labour history. See Chapters Three, Seven and Eight. All quotes are from "The Labour Process and Labour History" - Richard Price, 'Social History', Volume 8, Number One. Jan 1983. pp. 57-75.

68. See "Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism" - Richard Hyman, Pluto Press, London, 1971 & "Trade Unions and Socialist Politics" - John Kelly, Verso, London, 1988.

69. Marx in "Wages, Price and Profit" in Selected Works, Marx/Engels, Moscow 1958. Volume 1, pp.446-7.

70. "Prepare For Action!" - Tom Mann in 'The Industrial Syndicalist' July 1910, p. 19.

71. "Labouring Men" - E.J. Hobsbawm, Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1964.

72. For railway workers see "The Railway Workers 1840-1970" - Frank McKenna, Faber & Faber, London, 1980.

73. Zeitlin op. cit. pp. 161-7 especially.

74. "Industrial Relations : A Marxist Introduction" - Richard Hyman, Macmillan, London, 1975. p. 41.

75. Hobsbawm (1964) p. 191.

76. See Hyman (1975) p.52 in particular, though the whole chapter on Union Structure is excellent.

77. Trotsky quoted in "Marxism and Trade Union Struggle" - T. Cliff and D. Gluckstein, Bookmarks, London, 1986. p. 30.

78. Hyman (1975) p. 72.

79. Hobsbawm (1964) p. 328.

80. See "The Worker's Union" op. cit. "Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism" - Pluto Press, London, 1971. "Strikes" - Fontana, London, 1972. "Industrial Relations - A Marxist Introduction" MacMillan, London, 1975. "British Trade Unionism : Post-War Trends and Future Prospects" in International Socialism, 2 : 8, "Class Struggle and the Trade Union Movement" - in "A Socialist Anatomy of Britain" Ed. D. Coates, G. Johnston & R. Bush. - Polity Press, Cambridge 1985, "The Political Economy of Industrial Relations" - MacMillan, London, 1989.

81. The Webbs op. cit. p. 468.

82. See the discussion in "Trade Unions and Socialist Politics" John Kelly op. cit. pp. 147-183.

83. "A History of Trade Unionism" - Sydney & Beatrice Webb, Longmans, London, 1920. p. 468-70 and p. 594.

84. "Trade Unions as Intermediary Organisations" - Walter Müller-Jentsch, in 'Economic & Industrial Democracy' Volume Six. Sage, London, 1985. pp. 3-33.

85. "Political Parties" - R. Michels, Hearst, 1915. "The Government of British Trade Unions" - J. Goldstein, Allen & Unwin, London, 1952. Hyman op. cit. in his discussion of this issue pp. 64-93. quotes Clegg; '[the impression might be drawn]...that power in most British unions is highly centralised in the hands of an oligarchy of leaders, or even

Notes - Labour Process...

of a single autocrat. In fact this inference is so wide of the mark, so inconsistent with the facts of trade union life as to be laughable...

86. "Conflict and Democracy : Studies in Trade Union Government" - John Hemmingway, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1978. See Chapter Five on 'Local Autonomy versus National Unity: The Bridgend Busmen, 1968-71'. The problem with this study is the failure to relate the case study to the wider context of the national situation.

87. Hyman & Kelly op. cit. and James Hinton "The First Shop Stewards Movement" - George, Allen & Unwin, London. 1983.

88. Zeitlin op. cit. p. 169.

89. "The Sociology of Industrial Relations" - V.L. Allen, Longman, London, 1971. p. 51.

90. See Hyman "Class Struggle and the Trade Union Movement" 1985, op. cit. pp. 118-9.

91. "Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain" - James Cronin, Croom Helm, London, 1979. pp. 9-10.

92. Ibid. p. 66.

93. Offe & Wiesenhal op. cit. pp. 104-5.

94. 'Theory in Industrial Relations' in "Industrial Relations in a Cold Climate" - Richard Hyman, Macmillan Press, London, 1989. p. 137.

95. See Richard Price 'Labour Process and Labour History' op. cit.

96. "Trade Unions and the Capitalist State" - Leo Panitch, New Left Review, Number 125, January/February 1981.

97. "Recent Theorizations of Corporatism : Reflections on a Growth Industry" - Leo Panitch, British Journal of Sociology, Volume 31, Number 2, June 1980. pp. 159-187.

98. Panitch (1980) p. 160.

99. "Social Democracy and Industrial Militancy - The Labour Party, Trade Unions and Incomes Policy 1945-74" - Leo Panitch, Cambridge University Press, 1976. "Working Class Politics in Crisis - Essays on Labour and the State" - Leo Panitch, Verso, London, 1986.

CHAPTER FOUR :

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ROAD PASSENGER TRANSPORT INDUSTRY

This chapter will briefly survey the development of the road passenger transport industry from 1889 to 1947. The industry is best considered in three major segments. The first is the electrification and municipalisation of tramways. The second is the development of bus services in London and the last is the development of bus services outside London most of which were outside of municipal control since they were essentially inter-urban and rural rather than urban services.

The first area of interest is the impact of mechanisation on horse trams and buses. Generally speaking tramway systems were mechanised from the 1890's and electrification took place around the turn of the century. The motor-bus was first extensively developed in London in the first decade of this century. The greatest expansion of the motor-bus took place after the the first world war in the provincial rather than the urban sector. These developments can be situated into a wider historical periodisation whereby electric tramways represented the first clean, fast and reliable means of urban road passenger transport; a crucial phase in the historical development of cities. Electric tramways can be seen as the fullest and final urban phase of development of the railway age. The motor-bus, by marked contrast, represented the final break from fixed 'road' (i.e. rail) systems and the first phase of development of the automobile age.

The electric tram (and it's close relative; the electric underground train) provided the technical solutions to the most pressing problems of urban life. It allowed cities to spread themselves spatially enabling the separation of work and home and the development of areas of specialisation in urban centres between finance, retailing, wholesaling and

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

manufacturing. At the same time, through the mass movement of people using minimum space, it allowed the centralisation and concentration of cities. It was an essential ingredient in the growth of the mass market and the improvement of housing conditions. Before the advent of electric trams the spatial separation of work and home and home and leisure was limited by the distance that could be travelled on foot or by horse buses and trams which travelled ever more slowly through filthy and congested streets. The motor-bus, by contrast, encouraged the further spread of cities, encouraged the penetration of the mass market into the countryside and completed the process of subordination of country by town.

The second area of interest is the relationship between the new modes of transportation and the market. In each case, it will be argued, the successful development of the industry depended on the suppression of competition and the growth of monopoly, either municipal or private, control of the market. Again this can be placed into a wider periodisation in which competitive capitalism was undergoing a 'fractured shift' towards monopoly capitalism. The new public transport industry was a crucial part of this development.

The third area of discussion is the growing interest of the state, firstly at municipal and later at national level, in the control and regulation of public transport. There were a variety of reasons for this interest; these include the attempt by the parliamentary railway lobby to prevent the development of rival forms of public transport, the desire to protect municipal investment, the necessity of improving urban public transport and dealing with growing traffic chaos, especially in London, and finally the problem of public safety.

The theme that links these together is the impact of these changes in technology, ownership and control on the

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

labour process in the industry. It will be argued that these changes resulted in a transformation of the labour process. Firstly there emerged a professional management structure which gradually came to control the labour process through the replacement of formal by real subsumption of labour under capital. Secondly, centralisation of control and mechanisation of the labour process resulted in the creation of a homogenous labour force. This new labour force possessed uncommon skills, no longer under the pretence of self-employment but employed as wage-labour, working from a depot, tram shed or garage which most closely resembled the large, modern factory rather than a small stable. Thirdly, state intervention whether through municipal tram ownership or state regulation gradually placed more and more controls over the labour process, through the licensing of operatives, control over working hours and training and through the creation of new forms of bargaining over the terms of exploitation in the labour process. In other words, this chapter examines the development of the objective determinants of the labour process in the road passenger transport industry. The following chapter will examine the development of resistance, a subjective process, inside the labour process. Let us begin with the mechanisation of trams.

1 : The Development of Electric Tramways

The effects of new technology on the world of the horse-tram were dramatic, firstly the size and scale of the tram networks grew enormously. Secondly the amount of capital necessary to bridge the gap between local small horse-tram networks and an electrified system ensured that only a few large companies such as British Electric Traction and the Imperial Group, or the local municipality could risk sufficient capital necessary to electrify and extend the network. Thirdly the development of transport networks and

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

systems rather than individual horse drawn vehicles required new legislation over rights of way, new measures of public control and regulation. Finally the electrification of tramways stimulated other industry both to relocate and to consider the possibilities of electric power.

These were not the only effects; tramway development raised questions about the efficiency of the private sector in provision of public transport. Electric tramways appeared to be a form of natural monopoly which in order to come to full fruition required heavy investment and consequently could only flourish in a protected and guaranteed market. Thus the electrification of tramways required not merely large sums of capital but some degree of public regulation, protection and control. Increasing demands for public involvement in urban public transport due to the failure of private capital to meet individual and business needs were made just as strongly in North America as in Britain.¹

Electrification required massive centralisation and concentration of capital whether public or private. The resulting creation of monopoly control, mostly municipal, transformed the relationship between transport workers and their new bosses. Employees no longer worked in small, geographically scattered workplaces using skills which were commonplace. Long hours and low pay were replaced by a new intensity of labour. The replacement of a multitude of small operators each in competition with one another by large scale organisations operating systematic services on definite timetables resulted in massive changes in the control and organisation of work.

1a : The Problems of Mechanisation.

Although the aptly named Francis Train had begun experiments with horse drawn trams in Birkenhead and London as early as 1859, tramway development was limited by the

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

problems of establishing a permanent way along city streets. There were no simple means of promoting tramways, each of which required a special Parliamentary Bill and was open to long and costly objections from the owners of property along public streets. Further there were fears for public safety. Tramway development began properly after the Tramways Act of 1870 which made their promotion of tramways much easier, since all that was required was application to the Board of Trade rather than promotion of a Parliamentary Bill. The Act covered many points of which the most fundamental was the right of the Local Authority to compulsory purchase of the tramway after twenty one years. This was a concession in return for a diminution of the rights of property owners to object to tramline construction. At this time local authorities were not allowed to operate tramways. It was the 1870 Act that launched the age of the tram.

The 1870 Act did not, however, solve the technical problems of the mechanisation of horse trams. Given the close parallels between tramways and railways it is hardly surprising that the first experiments should be with steam traction. Despite numerous attempts by major locomotive builders to develop a successful tram engine², it was not until 1881 that a viable engine was developed by Beyer, Peacock and Co. of Gorton. This steam tramcar first saw service on the North Staffordshire Tramway and over 500 were built during the next five years.

Steam traction was ultimately a failure. Firstly because of fears for public safety which led to the stringent restrictions on design embodied in the Act of 1879; the 'Use of Mechanical Power on Tramways Act'. These restrictions when applied to street vehicles operating in confined streets created major problems not previously addressed in locomotive design. Consequently steam traction was never really successful, although Charles Klapper⁴ estimates that by 1895 about 500 steam engines were in operation in the U.K. and some 2,500 world-wide, though by 1899 only 75 were

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

still in service in Britain and the last street steam tramway ceased operation in 1909. Nevertheless, the steam age saw the emergence of several large systems⁵ and a four fold increase in track mileage, from 238 miles in 1878 to 938 miles just twenty years later. Attempts to use steam traction by providing power from stationary steam engines through various means, failed.⁶ Early research into oil-gas motors and petrol engines to power tramcars proved equally futile.⁷

The decisive advantage of electric traction was that it separated the generation of motive power from the vehicle itself and hence solved the problem of producing a small vehicle with sufficient power. This in itself created a new problem which was the problem of supplying electric power to the tramcar in a safe manner. This problem prevented the rapid development of electric traction since none of the earliest solutions proved effective.⁸ The technical solution to this problem was overhead cables although these were also beset with problems which were finally solved by Frank Sprague of Richmond, Virginia using a double overhead cable system.⁹ By the early 1890's the teething problems were beginning to be solved. In 1893 Siemens successfully converted the Guernsey tramway from steam to electric traction. That same year the South Staffordshire electrified the line from Darlaston to Walsall, pioneering the use of the 'swivelling trolley'. The Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company developed a tramcar with the trolley mounted in the middle to allow reversible operation in 1895. The major technical problems had been solved.

1b : The Obstacles to Electrification.

The development of suitable technology by no means removed the political, financial, economic and social obstacles to tramway electrification as the following example from the Black Country demonstrates¹⁰. The existing

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

organisation of the industry here was chaotic, with no less than fourteen companies interested at one time or other in tramway operation. These companies were typically small, under capitalised, and usually set up by local businessmen with direct interests in tramway construction and operation. Thus the promoters of the Dudley & Tipton Tramways Order No.1 dated 1881 (the Order had to be obtained through application to the Board of Trade) were William Wilkinson - Ironmaster, Thomas Mills - Coalmaster, Henry Christian - Gentleman, Herbert Wheeler - Rail & Carriage Manufacturer, and Henry Thomas McNeale - Merchant. Similarly, the promoters of the Birmingham & Midland Tramways Company included Herbert Wheeler again, William Henry Dawes - Ironmaster of Bromford Ironworks, West Bromwich, and three others whose interests are not recorded. The multitude of companies involved prevented the development of a logical network and the vast majority of tramway orders were purely speculative, rarely resulting in construction. Indeed, both in Britain and the U.S.A. tramway development was largely conditioned by speculation and largely motivated by a desire to accumulate profits either from land development or through the supply of raw materials and equipment.¹¹ By 1897, or twenty seven years after the first tramway order, the Black Country with its one million population spread over eighty square miles had a mere 54 miles of tramway built on two different guages, worked by three different methods, by five different companies.

It was precisely this wide spread of inefficient systems which prevented both sufficient profits to electrify and sufficient passengers to justify electrification, because electrification relied on a short headway between trams to justify the cost. Even so electric trams, despite the high capital costs, were much cheaper to operate, as Table One, on the next page, shows. The operating costs of the South Staffordshire Electric System were unrivalled for cheapness with the exception of the Birmingham Tramways cable system. Of these two systems, electrification, though costly, was

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

----- TABLE ONE -----

OPERATING COSTS OF DIFFERENT MIDLANDS TRAM SYSTEMS IN
PENCE (OLD) PER MILE IN THE 1890'S¹²

South Staffordshire Tramways Co.;	
Wilkinson Locomotive Steam Engines	
Vertical Boilers.....	7.04d.
Birmingham & Midlands Tramway Co.;	
Kitson Locomotive Steam Engines.....	7.83d.
Dudley & Stourbridge Steam Tramways Co.;	
Kitson Locomotive Steam Engines.....	8.57d.
Birmingham Central Tramways Co.;	
Kitson, Falcon & Beyer Peacock	
Locomotive Steam Engines.....	6.79d.
Electric Accumulator.....	11.59d.
Cable.....	4.22d.
South Staffordshire Tramways Co.;	
Electric System.....	4.06d.

cheaper to construct and more reliable in operation. By 1900 the superiority of electric tramways was accepted by the industry. As J. Clifton-Robinson stated in a paper to the Cleveland institute of Engineers;

"I can say that an extended experience...and a most careful inquiry...convincing me that the overhead electric trolley system is to-day, wherever the question of tramway traction has to be considered, scientifically and commercially, the only system to which a community, a corporation or a capitalist can reasonably turn." ¹³

Yet the decisive advantage of electric traction was insufficient to prevent near bankruptcy of the South Staffordshire. By 1897, according to the Director, Mr. S.R. Blundstone, the Company had £50,000 in assets and liabilities of £73,000¹⁴. The situation was saved by the British Electric Traction Company (B.E.T.), formed in 1896 with the intention of reshaping the industry through substantial injections of capital to take advantage of this new technology. The significance of B.E.T. was that unlike the local capitalists of the South Staffs Company, they had access to significant sums of capital. Electrification, because of the large capital outlay, required a very modern sort of capital funding.

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

1c : Electrification and Municipalisation

B.E.T. however soon discovered that more than just capital was required. They were hoping to repeat their success in the Potteries where by achieving agreement with eighteen local authorities a comprehensive tramway system had been developed. This was blocked by the intervention of local authorities using their powers to purchase lines at scrap value after twenty-one years, powers derived from the 1870 Act¹⁵. This episode demonstrated the decisive importance both to public and private companies of the 'network' of services or to put it another way, the monopoly of the market. Electrification required a network of services and this network required a monopoly in order to be profitable. But this monopoly in turn depended upon municipal cooperation. Where no one company could dominate the provision of services, these services were not simply 'more competitive' they were never provided at all. Hence all private companies had to be able to get municipal approval for their plans. Thus electrification required more than just reorganisation of the industry into much larger units, it required municipal cooperation and approval.

The official history of British Electric Traction claims that;

".....the Tramways Act of 1870, damned up the normal flow of capital from reaching the industry."¹⁶

The reality was rather different; the 'normal flow of capital' was not forthcoming because private tramways were, prior to electrification, generally unprofitable. An attempt to alleviate the 'problem' was promotion by B.E.T. of the 1896 Light Railways Act which relieved some of the conditions concerning the objection of property holders with frontages on proposed tramlines. Further the time between application and completion was lengthened from two to five years. In certain cases such as Walsall, the implementation

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

of the twenty one year rule was skirted round, but in general the cost of electrification, new equipment and electricity generating facilities put the prospect of electrification out of reach of all but the larger companies of which B.E.T. soon emerged by the process of acquisition, takeover and merger as the foremost representative.

It was not so much that the 1870 Act inhibited private capital from entering the tramway industry, but rather that for electrification to be implemented successfully required more than simply capital, it required the protection of a local authority and a guarantee of monopoly in the local transport market. Electrification could only work where the local authority was prepared to make agreements with private capital or more likely where the local authority was prepared to undertake the work. Therefore electrification was almost synonymous with municipalisation as Table Two shows. This transfer to public ownership took place between

----- TABLE TWO -----

TRAMWAY SYSTEMS AND TYPES OF OWNERSHIP. ¹⁷		
SYSTEM TYPE	LOCAL AUTHORITY	PRIVATE
Wholly/Mainly Electric	51 Systems	36 Systems*
Mainly Horse	9 Systems	33 Systems*
Steam	2 Systems	6 Systems
Cable	1 System +	1 System
Gas	-	1 System
Total	62 Systems	79 Systems

+ = London County Council already included.
* = Only eight remained private on electrification.

1895 and 1905, from 1901 to 1903 alone 62 systems were taken into municipal hands and by 1905 174 systems were in public hands compared to 146 in private hands. Nevertheless the progress of electrification was very slow compared to the situation in the U.S.A. Before the wave of municipalisation in 1896 only 80 miles out of a possible 1,000 miles of

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

tramway had been electrified, whereas across the Atlantic there were nearly 13,000 miles of electrified tramway, one quarter of the network.

Twenty five out of thirty three private horse drawn tramways became public on electrification, yet even these figures underestimate the scale of municipalization and concentration of ownership.¹⁸ The number of passengers increased dramatically with the process of electrification which brought cheaper fares and more reliable services. In 1899-1900 1,065 million passengers were carried by municipally owned trams and by 1914 the number was 2,634 million.

The impact of municipal ownership as propagated by the 'progressive' Liberals and the Fabians had an enormous influence on the tram industry; in terms of investment and efficiency of operation, on general social policy especially in housing, and also in terms of their role as 'model' employers. London's new tram system was described by one Liberal writer thus;

"We have fast lines of electric trams, brilliantly lighted in which reading is a pleasure...Each workmen today in the district has had an hour added to his life- half an hour actually saved from the transit and half an hour given back to him in the transit...Family after family are evacuating the blocks and crowded tenements for little four roomed cottages, with little gardens in Hither Green or Tooting..."¹⁹

Let us examine the L.C.C. in more detail.

1d The L.C.C. Tramways

The L.C.C. planned to take over and electrify all of London's private tramways, beginning south of the river in 1900 and extending northwards in 1903.²⁰ The B.E.T. interest was represented by the Metropolitan Electric Traction Company (M.E.T.Co) and the Imperial Group through the London United Tramway Company (L.U.T.Co). Also some municipalities

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

such as Croydon and Barking had begun their own programme of electrification. The L.C.C. as Table Three shows soon became the dominant operator. The first main acquisition was the London Tramways Co. which for £850,000 brought the L.C.C. control of a network from Streatham to Greenwich, carrying 100,000,000 passengers annually and 1,870 employees. By 1904 18.5 miles had been electrified, and a further 12 miles by 1906, the year in which a generating station was built at Greenwich. In 1906 the principle northern company, the North Metropolitan was acquired for £436,000. The scale of investment was huge, in all some £13,500,000 or a little short of Yerkes investment plans for the London Electric Railway Company, the main underground railway company.

----- **TABLE THREE** -----

PASSENGER JOURNEYS ON LONDON TRAMS/BUSES IN MILLIONS ²¹					
YEAR	L.C.C. TRAMS	TOTAL TRAMS	L.C.C. % ALL TRAMS	BUSES	L.C.C. % BUSES
1903	117	394	29.7%	287	40.8%
1904	165	432	38.2%	289	57.1%
1905	184	478	38.5%	291	63.0%
1906	314 ⁺	509	61.7%	292	107.5%
1907	373	590	63.2%	330	113.0%*
1908	413	636	65.0%	340	121.5%*
1909	451	687	65.6%	311	145.0%*
1910	505	764	66.1%	377	134.0%*

* = Based on estimated receipts, probably underestimate.
 + = L.C.C. acquire North Metropolitan.

Table Three shows how with massive investment the L.C.C. could grow both relatively and absolutely compared to other companies and modes of travel. Total profits increased from just under £100,000 in 1903/4 to £789,000 in 1909/10, the rate of return on investment increasing from 2.6% to 7.37%.²² The Progressive majority on the Council used some of these profits to pursue an enlightened labour policy as we shall see.

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

le : The Transformation of the Labour Process

An account of the conditions of Liverpool tramwaymen in 1889 demonstrates the 'sweated' nature of the trade.

"Men worked for seven days a week averaging some fourteen hours a day with wages varying from 17s 6d. for the lowest grade of conductor to 32s. a week for the most experienced drivers. The agreement each employee signed on appointment committed him to a multiplicity of rules and regulations that, if broken, led at best to a fine and at worst to prosecution in court and instant dismissal from the company on the flimsiest of evidence. Few employees received a full week's wage, deductions being commonplace for alleged misdemeanours."²³

Tramway workers were expected to encourage custom, having to explain any diminution in takings, whilst overloading could lead to a police summons served on the conductor who had to both lose a day's pay to appear in court and pay any consequent fine. Drivers were responsible for compensation to passengers for injuries and damage to tramcars in accidents, the onus of proof being on the driver. Supervision was extremely harsh;

"All employees were kept under surveillance by a system of checkers and, more insidiously, by private spies. The former had to submit frequent adverse reports to keep their jobs, whilst the latter were recruited by advertisement in the local press from people who travelled on the company's vehicles. If they reported misconduct by employees their fares were refunded. The men claimed that complaints made by checkers or by passengers usually led to fines or dismissal with scant regard being taken of the employee's explanations and, furthermore they lost pay in attending the company office."²⁴

The 'punch' system of ticket issuing had recently been introduced and any discrepancy between the machine recorded total and takings were deducted from conductors pay. Fully 25% of the employees were dismissed each year and each employee had to sign a pledge not to join the union whilst those suspected of membership were dismissed when reported for any offence.

The L.C.C. behaved very differently towards their

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

employees. In September 1898, the L.C.C. Highways Committee intervened in a dispute between the North Metropolitan Company and the union over the right to belong to a trade union. The Committee led by Sir John Benn, a 'progressive' came down on the side of the union and threatened to withdraw the companies lease. The L.C.C. became a model employer according to one contemporary observer;

"...the men who work upon its trams pay nothing for their uniforms. Their working day is ten hours. Time lost by such hindrances as fog, fire and processions is paid for (at the rate known in the trade as 'time and a half'). Work on a seventh day of the week, when it occurs is paid at time and a quarter rates. Moreover any horse driver in the Council's service who desires to qualify as an electric driver can be trained, free of charge, in the municipal technical school; whereas the charge for training made by one of the private companies is £5. Not only does the L.C.C. issue to its inspectors special instructions to avoid arbitrary and domineering treatment of subordinates; it also affords to every man accused by an inspector the opportunity of meeting his accuser face to face, and of telling his own story."²⁵

With electrification came fewer hours and better pay. Thus when the Southern system was taken over the sixteen hour day, seven day week was changed at an annual cost of £14,000 to an eleven and a quarter hour day six days per week. The following year after an operating profit of £53,000 some of the money, some £10,000 reduced the working day to ten hours with no loss of pay. The L.C.C. also introduced paid holidays.

Not all municipal authorities were by any means as generous employers, nevertheless a combination of electrification and municipal ownership transformed the labour process in the industry. The decade before the first world war was a golden age of municipal tram operation. By 1911 75% of tramways were in municipal hands and B.E.T. controlled 60% of the remainder²⁶. But the golden age was short lived. No sooner had the electric tram appeared to dominate urban public transport than a serious rival emerged.

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

2: The Motor-Bus in London

London provided the biggest opportunities for bus mechanisation, as trams were prevented from operating across the centre, around Westminster and through the City. This was largely due to public hostility to tramways and especially to the overhead wires, a problem common to both London and New York²⁷. Just as with tramways there were all sorts of legal and technical obstacles to the mechanisation of horse-buses.

2a : Technical and Legal Problems.

As early as the 1830's there were successful experiments with steam propulsion. A fatal accident prevented further development²⁸ and when interest revived the Railway lobby in Parliament forced through the Locomotive Acts of 1861 and 1865; the first enforced speed limits of five miles per hour in towns; the second reduced this to two miles per hour and introduced the famous red flag, which was held by a man walking in front of the vehicle. The Red Flag Act was repealed in 1878 but the speed limits remained until 1896, and even then the limit was only raised to fourteen miles per hour which the Local Government Board promptly reduced to twelve miles per hour. It was not until 1903 that the limit was raised to twenty miles per hour.

These laws restricted the development of an indigenous motor vehicle industry.²⁹ Experiments in the 1890's with electric vehicles powered by batteries and steam power were unsuccessful.³⁰ Only in 1902 was there a decisive breakthrough with the signing of an agreement between G.F. Milnes & Co. Ltd., tramway builders, and Daimler Motoren Gesellschaft to build the Milnes-Daimler petrol driven bus.

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

This was the first petrol bus which could be operated on a serious commercial basis. However, a serious accident in which ten people died, resulted in the tightening of police regulations in 1906. These reduced the maximum size, capacity, speed and weight of vehicles and controlled their design.³¹ Yet despite all these problems by 1906 Milnes-Daimler, Straker-Squire, De Dions, Wolseley and Clarksons were all producing motor-buses. Tillings were the first company to acquire motor-buses, choosing Milnes-Daimler as did the largest London horse-bus company, the London General Omnibus Company (L.G.O.C.).³²

1b : From Competition to Monopoly in London

The L.G.O.C. (formed by an amalgamation of 1858) by 1905 operated 1,400 vehicles worked by 17,000 horses. The end of that year saw the collapse of the first motor-bus 'boom'. The L.G.O.C. had been relatively cautious in pursuing mechanisation, operating only 171 motor buses of the 984 in London by March 1907. The smaller London Motor Omnibus Company operated 195 and the Road Car Company operated 163, one hundred more than their nearest rival. Thus the competition was between these three companies and Tillings which despite an early start, faced severe problems by 1907.³³

----- **TABLE FOUR** -----

THE COMPOSITION OF THE LONDON BUS FLEET : 1904 TO 1912³⁴

YEAR	MOTOR BUSES	HORSE BUSES	TOTAL
1904	31	3,551	3,582
1905	241	3,484	3,725
1906	783	2,964	3,747
1907	1,205	2,557	3,762
1908	1,133	2,155	3,288
1909	1,180	1,771	2,851
1910	1,200	1,103	2,203
1911	1,962	786	2,748
1912	2,908	376	3,284

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

Motor buses were introduced far more quickly than horse buses were withdrawn as shown in Table Four. This Table demonstrates the pattern of events quite clearly; over-expansion of motor fleets from 1904 to 1907, followed by consolidation of motor fleets and reduction in horse buses from 1907 to 1910, followed by renewed expansion from 1911.

The over-expansion of 1904-1907 resulted in a fierce price cutting war in which all the major companies lost money.³⁵ The L.G.O.C. lost £62,679 in the first six months of 1907 and a further £147,253 in the next twelve months, the London Road Car Company lost £24,077 in 1907. Several companies such as the London Power Omnibus Company went bankrupt, others such as the Salisbury-Jones group were forced into partnership due to severe operating difficulties caused by the majority of the 260 strong fleet, over 160 vehicles, being unfit to drive. This group was later recapitalized as Vanguard. Other companies scrapped their fleet completely, such as Birch Brothers and Onions of Victoria, although these two only operated 23 motor vehicles between them. The major operating companies were forced to consider merger, or at least some restriction on competition. Nevertheless the collapse had some positive results from the point of view of the larger companies in breaking down the old horse-bus association system in which the interests of smaller operators had predominated. The first result of this crisis was a new organisation called the London Passenger Traffic Conference which first met in 1907 to discuss fares and pooling arrangements.³⁶ The meeting co-ordinated all fares in London from December 15th. 1907. The second result was the merger of the L.G.O.C., the London Road Car Company and Vanguard in 1908, creating a company with over £2.5 million capital and controlling over 80% of the motor bus fleet³⁷.

The newly reformed L.G.O.C. scrapped one quarter of the fleet and turned substantial losses into profits of £120,000 in 1910. Much of this was the work of Frank Searle, a recent

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

recruit from the Great Western Railway works at Swindon. Searle made such sweeping changes at Mortlake Garage that within three months he was chief engineer at the L.G.O.C.. The problems at Mortlake were indicative of the general lunacy of the years of intense competition. At Mortlake there were twenty eight different makes of motor-bus, heavily cannibalised and only 25% operational. The changes introduced by Searle included segregating different makes and concentrating them at different garages, and introducing specialization of skills among the maintenance staff. This experience at Mortlake allowed him to convince the L.G.O.C. to begin production of motor-buses at the Walthamstow overhaul works. The first make, the X1 was nicknamed the 'Daimler-Wolsley-Straker' due to its cannibalized appearance. The 'B' type came next, and by 1911 was in full production. The production was taken over by a separate but related company; Associated Electrical Components (A.E.C.).

Meanwhile the centralisation of capital continued apace. The Great Eastern was acquired in 1911 adding a further 120 buses to the L.G.O.C. fleet of 1,080. In 1909 an arrangement with Tillings led to the sharing of routes and in 1912 a formal agreement led to Tillings limiting their fleet in London to 150 from October 6th. 1913. From then on Tillings looked outside London for expansion.³⁸ From 1910 to 1914 the number of buses expanded rapidly, the twelve months from January 1st. 1911 saw the number increase from 1,149 to 1,641, of which the L.G.O.C. was overwhelmingly the main operator. This huge expansion and monopolisation led to a take-over bid by the Underground Electric Railways of London (U.E.R.L.) which controlled most of the tube system by 1913.³⁹ The vast majority of what was to be London Transport was amalgamated by 1913, with the exception of the tramways which were increasingly dominated by the activities of the London County Council. The U.E.R.L. had been created by the activity of Charles Yerkes, an American transit speculator whose knowledge of capital markets, astute and ruthless pursuit of amalgamations and takeovers, and managerial

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

experience gained from the operation of the Pennsylvania Railroad, the world's first company to adopt a multi-divisional structure and tight managerial control, were all put to good use in the creation of London's transport monopoly⁴⁰.

2c : The Transformation of the Labour Process

The labour process of horse-bus drivers was similar to those of the horse-tram. Horse-bus drivers were paid nominally by the day. According to one contemporary report;

"The length of the day varies somewhat on different routes, but the average is about fifteen hours... Moreover, the omnibus man works as a rule thirteen days a fortnight... Out of his nominal daily wage of 7s. or 8s., the driver has to provide rugs, capes and whips. custom requires of him 'tips' to horse-keepers, pullers-up, &c., the total of which is estimated at not far short of a shilling a day... Superhuman punctuality is expected of the omnibus. Should it arrive two or three minutes late - or two or three minutes early - at one of it's 'points', its driver may be suspended from work for from two to seven days. The conductor, whose nominal wage is 6s. a day, is likely to be suspended or discharged if his takings fall below the average..."⁴¹

Drivers and conductors were expected to defray the costs of an accident for which they were liable by means of membership of a Company run 'Drivers' and Conductors' Accident Club'. Membership was not compulsory yet curiously nobody seemed to remain in employment if not a member. The cost of membership was 1s. for drivers and 6d. for conductors, despite the fact that conductors were extremely unlikely to be responsible for accidents. Further when a journey was stopped by fog, fire or a procession then pay was deducted, even if the crew were forced to bring the omnibus in after the usual hour.

Mechanisation ended the sub-contracting status of the crews who no longer had to pay for the horses feed and keep. Instead they became direct employees paid a wage rather than a share of the takings. Mechanisation transformed the

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

workplace as Robert Williams describes;

"[the motor bus driver]...has in his hands a machine - great, heavy and apparently cumbrous thing though it be, responds to the veriest touch of the steering wheel ...he returns his motor-bus to the garage which, unlike the old-time stable with its straw and litter, grooms and ostlers, is a factory for repair work, washing, cleaning and overhauling in general..Today..he is but one small cog in the great machine of the Traffic Combine." ⁴²

The labour force was similarly transformed. In 1913, out of 4,346 motor-bus drivers employed by the L.G.O.C. only 1,098 had been with the company more than three years, in other words from the time when horse-buses were common. Further, the chairman Albert Stanley, claimed that only those employed since 1908 had been horse-bus drivers, some 502 men at most.⁴³ Many new drivers appear not to have driven before.⁴⁴ Drivers also had to pay for their training and for license and registration fees which amounted to 10s. a year.

However mechanisation did not bring the improvements in conditions associated with municipalisation of tramways. Working hours became shorter with the introduction of a shift system but more intense. Pay was by the journey system rather than by the hour penalising the crews for hold-ups and ensuring bitterness between them. It worked as follows;

"Driver and conductor are paid by the journey, and the required number of journeys is such that only under the most favourable conditions can it be completed. At least one car in three will fail in the task. Let us consider, for instance, the case of certain cars which, at one period, were timed to do four journeys, but have recently been required to make six in the day. Two shifts are worked, each set of men being supposed to make three journeys. Since the very barest measure of time is allowed, the men are constantly on the strain; they are tempted to take risks, and are unwilling to pause long enough for the picking up and setting down of passengers. At the close of the period allowed for the first shift, the third journey will in all probability not be finished, but it may have been begun and will be concluded before the car is brought in. It thus becomes more impossible than ever for the second set of journeys to be compressed into the shortened hours left for the second shift...Two journeys may be

The-Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

achieved, in which case the driver may receive from 4s. to 5s. and the conductor from 3s. to 4s."⁴⁵

Breakdowns, which were extremely frequent since up to one quarter of the fleet was off the road at any time, were not paid for, whilst the crew were forced to remain with the vehicle until a trolley arrived to tow it in.

Supervision was another source of bitter complaint;

"These people, not satisfied with the police traps, have set their own `spots' on the road to trap their own men for the heinous offence of trying to run to time, or to make up lost time, having been held up in heavy traffic, and incidentally to make profits for them; and for this crime, seven days rest and reduced to a lower rate of pay for varying periods. `Spots' on the road are paid a bonus for reporting drivers for racing their engines or for extra consumption of petrol or lubrication, smoking on duty and generally making the driver's life hell. Then again, the conductors get three days for incivility, punching a ticket in the wrong section, not waiting till passengers are seated, or uncollected fares, they well know that if both drivers and conductors adhered strictly to the rules of the company it would be impossible to run their services effectively."⁴⁶

The new labour process resulted in more intense work, close and dictatorial supervision, the imposition of numerous rules and regulations, without any corresponding increase in pay. Nevertheless these new conditions created fertile soil for unionisation which will be discussed in the next chapter. Let us turn our attention to the impact of state intervention, control and regulation on the industry and the labour-process.

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

3 : State Intervention in Road Passenger Transport

The road passenger transport industry developed rapidly once the supply of vehicles recovered from the effects of the first world war. The tram industry, by contrast, faced a severe financial crisis. Firstly the municipal tram systems, best suited as they were to moving passengers living in high density housing in compact urban locations suffered from increased costs and stagnant or declining patronage. Secondly the growth of bus competition on these routes, especially in Central London, exacerbated these financial problems. Consequently there were increasing demands for state regulation and control of competition which gradually was extended to all aspects of public transport operation. This section will examine the financial crisis of the tramways, the first attempts to regulate competition in London, the Road Transport Act of 1930 and the creation of the London Passenger Transport Board in 1933.

3a : The Financial Crisis of the Tramway Industry.

Although passenger carryings had increased during the war there was a lack of investment and failure to replace rolling stock and equipment due to the war. According to B.E.T.'s official history, the main cause was `...the constant scaling down of fares...' and though `...the company tried to increase fares...this sometimes led to a boycott of the trams and always diverted some traffic to rival forms of transport...' ⁴⁷ In the financial year 1919 to 1920 the private companies between them lost £652,000 and the municipal services in England and Wales lost £1,500,000 in 1920. ⁴⁸ In London between 1919 and 1933 the L.U.T. made a deficit every year, the M.E.T. every year except 1921, 1922 and 1930, the S.M.E.T. every year except 1921, the L.C.C. in every year save three between 1920 and 1933. As Barker and Robbins point out; `...payments had to be made

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

from rate funds in nearly every year to nearly every municipal tramway account in London except Ilford's.⁴⁹

According to Dyos and Aldcroft;

"...the tram's fate was sealed soon after the First World War when the bus emerged as a serious rival. For a short time the tram maintained its ground; passenger traffic reached a peak in 1919-20 and then remained almost stable until 1927-8 when 4,700 million passenger journeys were made. But the operating performance of the bus improved considerably in the 1920's...with its many advantages of low capital cost, mobility, flexibility in operation, speed, frequency and comfort..."⁵⁰

Yet these supposed advantages were not readily apparent given the unregulated state of the bus industry. Whereas Glasgow municipal tramways provided;

"...a great system in the best sense, led by inspired management and giving a service of the very highest quality. The intensity of service, the high speed at which cars were able to take the right-angled junctions in the grids of streets in the city centre (due to superb track and the undewirable bow collector) and the excellent maintainance, all contributed to a lasting impression of sterling quality."⁵¹

In the Potteries, unbridled bus competition meant that;

"No time-table existed and the vehicles shuttled up and down in a continuous game of leap-frog...Competition between individual omnibuses accordingly became general, and convictions of both drivers and conductors for dangerous driving or obstruction were frequent."⁵²

B.E.T. decided to diversify as a result of serious financial trouble. As their own history explains;

"...as the full impact of the terms which they were forced to make with the municipalities made itself felt, it became impossible to pay a dividend on all capital...so things continued until 1915 when the directors were compelled to write down the capital by virtually £1,000,000."⁵³

B.E.T. responded to the financial crisis by progressively abandoning tramway operation after 1920.⁵⁴ Clearly competition between the tram and bus threatened the municipal investment of the previous two decades.

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

3b : Tram and Bus Competition in London

In London the Combine made unsuccessful attempts to get the L.C.C. into the pooling system after the war, but the L.C.C. still planned to control all road passenger transport in London. Thus in 1920, the Highways Committee announced a planned expenditure of £8,000,000 on 90 miles of new tramway routes⁵⁵. This plan failed as did the L.C.C.'s application to the House of Lords in 1922 to operate buses. This put the L.C.C. in an awkward position since it could neither control nor compete with the Combine.⁵⁶

The Combine was for cooperation and restriction of competition as the Chairman, Lord Ashfield (formerly Albert Stanley) made clear in a speech to shareholders in 1923;

"I am no believer in competition in urban transport but equally I am no believer in protected monopoly...What is needed is some responsible and judicial authority, able to say what is required stage by stage, for the development of London's traffic facilities, and able to secure those requirements, if not from those already engaged in the business, then from those who are willing to enter in, as they are needed.

Every Metropolitan city has been compelled to this solution...circumstances have hastened all those cities to consolidate their traffic undertakings, and to ensure that their future growth and development come by design and not by accident."⁵⁷

Why was Ashfield against competition? Why did he look for some 'responsible and judicial' authority instead of using the Combine's overwhelming market position?

"Competition is a dangerous weapon...competition causes congestion in the more remunerative routes, destroys reliable services on the less remunerative routes and curtails the unremunerative routes. Competition weakens the undertakings so that fresh capital required for progress cannot be obtained on reasonable terms."⁵⁸

The arrival of competition, in the form of the Independents, threatened not just municipal tramway finances but the Combine as well. Competition resulted in over-supply on some routes, under-supply on others and no service at all in

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

other areas. But given the Combine's overwhelming market position in bus transport, why did competition arise at all?

The immediate reason for the entry of competition was the post-war shortage of vehicles suffered by the L.G.O.C.⁵⁹ The first Independent to enter the fray was the chocolate covered 'Leyland Express', closely followed by the 'Admiral' fleet which quickly reached forty vehicles. By the end of 1923 substantial companies such as the City Motor Omnibus Company with 40 vehicles and the Cambrian Coaching Company with 50 vehicles were operating. The L.G.O.C. introduced 1,060 new vehicles in 1923 and by January 1924 68 Independents were operating at the lowest estimate 198 buses in direct competition almost totally in the Central area.⁶⁰

The situation came to a head with a major strike in 1924. This was caused by the proposal of the London and Suburban Traction Company to reduce pay, due to;

"...the large and rapidly increasing number of omnibuses working the areas served by tramways,..[as a result of which]..the earnings of my company are being seriously affected."⁶¹

The Company was part of the Combine operating 90% of London's buses which rather reduced the power of this argument. The Transport and General Workers' Union responded with the call for a single traffic authority and a repudiation of the wage cuts.⁶²

The two issues of wage cuts and public control were inextricably linked as shown in Table Five which demonstrates the effects of this competition on tramway finances. The table suggests that but for the appearance of the Independents, tramway finances would have continued their improving trend visible from 1921 onwards, although in the longer term their future was less secure. The growth of traffic on L.G.O.C. buses which avoided direct competition with the tramways continued unabated. It was the arrival of unrestricted competition which created the crisis leading to

TABLE FIVE

YEAR	NUMBER OF VEHICLES BY OPERATOR			PASSENGERS CARRIED IN MILLIONS			L.C.C. FINANCES	
	L.G.O.C.* BUSES	L.C.C. TRAMCARS	INDEPENDENT BUSES	L.G.O.C.* BUSES	L.C.C. CARS	INDEPENDENT BUSES	SURPLUS REVENUE ⁺	AFTER DEBT CHARGES ⁺⁺
1920	2,675	2,886	-	936	1,056	-	£614,947	-£100,712
1921	2,977	2,984	-	932	1,009	-	£280,773	-£590,580
1922	3,228	3,007	10	994	1,053	1	£773,429	-£88,757
1923	4,288	2,971	159	1,214	1,001	31	£1,235,028	£230,250
1924	4,534	2,814	459	1,377	983	108	£855,695	-£160,222
1925	4,558	2,806	556	1,483	984	188	£475,697	-£278,441
1926	4,552	2,760	395	1,543	965	173	£316,479	-£114,629

* Includes B.A.T./Tillings buses after 1921

+ Surplus on Revenue Account

++ Carried to Appropriation Fund after providing for Sinking Fund and Debt Charges

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

the appointment of a Court of Inquiry in March 1924.

The Court issued an Interim Report on the 24th. March which suggested that the cause of the dispute lay fundamentally in the inability of the tramway company to meet running expenses, renewal and legal obligations with regard to highway maintainance. The only solution was co-ordinating control by a public body.⁶⁴ A Parliamentary Bill, which had been prepared under the previous Conservative administration, contained such proposals. According to Barker & Robbins;

"...under whichever government, with or without a strike, some legislation of the kind, imposing a measure of public control would have been enacted that year or soon after."⁶⁵

Nevertheless, despite the fact that both Conservative and Labour Governments accepted the need for some sort of regulation did not mean that such regulation would lead inevitably to full public ownership of road passenger transport⁶⁶.

The 1924 London Traffic Act introduced a Licensing Authority under the Ministry of Transport which effectively regulated the number of buses allowed to ply on certain streets. Further a special body was created; The London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee, to advise and assist the Minister.⁶⁷ The elimination of the Independents was the first consequence of the 1924 Act. The Act required all operators to work pre-selected routes, with alternatives at weekends. All runs required letters or numbers (thus prefiguring the 1930 Act). Then in February 1925 a 'Restricted Street Order' was introduced covering 200 streets which forbade the introduction of any buses which were not already operating. In June a further 600 streets were added, mostly covering tram routes.

The London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee rejected an appeal by the Independents against the street orders. Since new services were now harder to introduce it

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

became possible for the L.G.O.C. to buy up the competition without the fear of new operators starting up. According to Frank Pick, the period from 1924 to 1927 represented the '...third period of amalgamation...'⁶⁸ By 1928 only 201 Independent buses were left. Once more London buses were under virtual monopoly control. State intervention had favoured the Combine.

3c : The Growth of State Regulation : The 1930 Road Traffic Act.

In 1928 a Royal Commission was appointed to examine all aspects of Road Transport. The municipal authorities were still convinced of the case for the tram. Liverpool Corporation produced an independent report written by a prominent member of the Institute of Transport in 1929, which stated that;

'...while motor buses have improved considerable during recent years. They cannot yet compete with tramcars during times of peak traffic loading, nor can they provide services at the low fares in operation on the tramways system.'⁶⁹

The Final Report of the Royal Commission on Transport concluded that tramways '...if not an obsolescent form of transport, are at all events in a state of obsolescence, causing much unnecessary danger to the public' They recommended that '...no additional tramways be constructed..' and that '...they should gradually disappear and give place to other forms of transport...'⁷⁰

Following this report municipalities increasingly replaced trams by buses. Thus the total municipal bus fleet grew from an estimated 1,705 vehicles in 1926/7 to 5,049 in 1930/1.⁷¹ On a different series of figures, provided by the Traffic Commissioners, municipal fleets increased again from 5,125 in 1931/2 to 6,479 in 1935/6. The increase slowed down after the 1930 Road Traffic Act because the Act prevented local authorities from operating buses beyond their boundaries,

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

thus setting a limit to the extension of municipal enterprise. The Road Traffic Act began from the assumption that all road passenger transport, which it aimed to regulate, would eventually be provided by the omnibus.

What did the Act mean in practical terms for bus operation? Hibbs summarises it as follows;

(1) Drivers and Conductors were licensed, Driving Tests were introduced, and the license holders were given numbered badges.

(2) Vehicles were regulated in terms of dimensions and mechanical fitness. Regulations covering these matters had previously been the concern of Local Authorities and the police.

(3) Bus Services and Operators were licensed and timetables and fare tables were agreed in advance, thus local pirates could not alter their fare structure and times so as to cream off traffic from the larger operators who publicised their fares and timetables in advance.

(4) All buses were to carry a copy of the Fare table and timetable.

(5) All operators had to have compulsory third party insurance, as did all vehicles.

(6) The system of speed limits was revised, and the 20 m.p.h. limit was abandoned as unenforceable.⁷²

The criteria for licensing operators and services were;

(a) The suitability of the route.

(b) The extent of the route already served by existing operators.

(c) The needs of the area as a whole.

(d) The co-ordination of all forms of passenger transport, fares were to be reasonable, publically displayed and there was to be no deliberate undercutting.

The effects of these criteria were to favour existing operators, to freeze the existing system of operation and to exclude unreliable and unfit operators in favour of those who could reasonably meet the conditions of operation. Who

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

were these unfit operators?

"Generally speaking, it was the small operators or independents who gave most cause for concern. Many of them had little idea how to manage a transport undertaking: they maintained services with broken down buses driven by incompetent drivers, until the vehicles dropped to pieces. The provision of services was poor; buses often ran to no fixed timetable and various doubtful practices were adopted in order to steal traffic from competitors, which not only led to wasteful competition but also threatened public safety." ⁷³

Through these criteria for operator licencing the Act effectively limited competition and allowed the main provincial operators to absorb the competition, in the same way that the L.G.O.C. had been able to embark on the 'third phase' of expansion after the 1924 Act. This is not to say that the 1930 Act was responsible for the pattern of ownership in the industry, for as one writer explains;

"Even before Parliament intervened there had been a noticeable trend towards amalgamation of bus companies." ⁷³

Glaister and Mulley suggest that there is a popular myth that the 1930 Act was promoted by the interests of the Railways, who in 1928 had purchased a large share of the provincial bus industry, and the Tramway operators, both of whom had seen revenues decline, the tramways by 21% in the previous decade, and the railways by 17% since 1923. As they put it;

"The literature of the 1930's attributed the quantity licensing provisions of the 1930 Road Traffic Act to two main causes. First a belief that uncontrolled competition produced an uncoordinated and wasteful transport system. Second, the combined pressure from railway and tram interests in an attempt to protect their own traffic - this pressure being exerted through their forceful evidence before the Royal Commission...

The more recent literature attributes the quantity licensing legislation to the same causes: wasteful competition and pressure exerted through the Royal Commission, from railways and other competitors of Road Transport." ⁷⁵

Glaister and Mulley reject this explanation based on

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

examination of Ministry of Transport records. Public regulation of buses was first discussed by the Hackney Vehicle Committee, a sub-committee of the Taxation Committee chaired by Sir Henry Maybury, the Director General of Roads. The main purpose of this committee, sitting in 1922, was to examine the question of road safety, which it was thought could be improved through a new system of licensing and regulation.⁷⁶ A sub-committee was set up to look at the potential forms of regulation. One of the members of this crucial sub-committee was none other than Frank Pick, Joint Assistant Managing Director of the Combine which owned the L.G.O.C.

The Committee discussed the administration of the new licensing system.⁷⁷ On the question of competition, it was felt by both operators and licensing authorities that in return for submitting to regulation the operators should receive compensation in the form of limits to competition. The Ministry of Transport's view on the question of competition was consistent with the Inquiry that preceded the London Traffic Act of 1924; namely that monopoly was undesirable but so was unrestricted competition and since licensing was required there would have to be limitations to competition in order to protect the public interest. The similarity of this view with those of Lord Ashfield discussed earlier is readily apparent.⁷⁸

Two bodies dissented from this view, the Motor Trade Association - the operators collective body and the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders. The second objection is more interesting and was put by Sydney Straker;

"...such a policy..cannot but end..in the operation of all passenger road services throughout the country by a limited number of Companies working together under territorial arrangements, each of them exercising on the respective licensing authorities an influence indirect...which must make it virtually impossible for any competitor to operate anywhere within such a territory."⁷⁹

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

These objections were not taken up by the Sub-Committee, and their recommendations became the basis for the Ministry of Transport's evidence to the Royal Commission on Transport set up in 1927. The only real change between the Sub-Committee and the Royal Commission was the adoption of the system of Traffic Commissioners which had been suggested by John Cliff of the T. & G.W.U. and Mr. Richard Howley, representative of the Provincial Omnibus Owners Association. Glaister and Mulley conclude;

"The Hackney Vehicle Committee, convened in 1922, played a crucial role in the development of the omnibus industry. The London Traffic Act of 1924 relied very heavily on the content of the Committee's Draft Report and the final form of the Hackney Vehicle Committee's Report laid the foundations for the Ministry of Transport's evidence before the Royal Commission. The interesting aspect of this Committee's performance was the considerable contribution made by the Sub-Committee. Chaired by Frank Pick...the sub-Committee primarily represented parties who would substantially benefit from the implementation of quality licensing."⁸⁰

Thus it was the London 'Combine' who most influenced the licensing arrangements rather than the T.G.W.U. as Hugh Clegg suggests.⁸¹

The Act was a product of concern for regulation of the industry for safety reasons, that this aim coincided with the interests of the largest concentrations of capital within the industry is proof of the increasing integration of big business and the state, and the increasing power of large companies within the bus industry. As L.A.G. Strong explains;

"The competition between free-lance operators after World War One makes an exciting story, but we must resist the temptation to elaborate it and so draw attention from the co-ordination that was taking place in the industry as a whole. One might say that a confused shower of sparks was flying from the rim of a wheel, but the hub and spokes were beginning to feel their strength and their first sense of unity."⁸²

Competition was already doomed through the operation of the market. State intervention in transport reinforced this tendency towards monopoly but it was not not the prime cause

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

of it, as Hibbs has suggested.⁸³

3d : The London Passenger Transport Board

In evidence to the 1928 Royal Commission the Transport and General Workers' Union had proposed the establishment of Area Traffic Boards with the power to establish Common Funds, common management of all such undertakings within the area and if necessary compulsory purchase and amalgamation. The union had also suggested that suburban railway lines be leased from the railway companies and operated by local transport boards. Not one of these suggestions found their way into the 1930 Act.⁸⁴ The next phase of legislation, the London Passenger Transport Bill, proposed the unification of all London Transport under one Public Board. This bill was drafted by Herbert Morrison, but the Labour Government collapsed in 1931 and the bill was subsequently passed by the National Government of 1931.

The first problem the Government faced was the level of compensation to be paid to the existing owners of London's transport. The settlement was complex, reflecting the sophisticated financial structure of the Combine. The former shareholders of the Underground Electric Railway Company and subsidiaries such as the L.G.O.C. received stock in the new Board in proportion to share capital issued together with items for 'goodwill' which carried guaranteed but differing rates of interest. The L.C.C. was less favourably treated. The compensation was generous and saddled the new Board with heavy financial obligations. Certainly the settlement did not represent any measure of wealth redistribution.⁸⁵

Previous Government Reports, claimed Morrison, showed consensus on the following points;

- (1) All transport services in London should be run by one single authority with co-ordinating and controlling powers.
- (2) Transport services could not be managed efficiently

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

by local or central government.

(3) This single authority should be a small and competent body.⁸⁶

The essential contribution from Labour was that socialised industry would be more efficient than private industry, and thus London Transport would become a model for the socialist organisation of industry, despite the fact that it was based on the model of the public corporation which the Conservative Party had already applied to the electricity industry and the B.B.C.

Morrison considered the key question to be `..a matter of business and organisation, and so far as it is possible for a non-technician - as a matter of technical management.'⁸⁷ Morrison proposed that the new board should be run by:

"... the best business brains that we can secure for the purpose. That does not exclude...somebody associated with local government in London possessing the necessary business ability. It is obvious that the people in charge, certainly the Chairman of the Board, must have great industrial and managerial ability, and we must be prepared to pay what is necessary in order to secure that ability, if the undertaking is to be efficient."⁸⁸

In other words the Board was to be run by `business brains', regardless of whether that business experience was in transport and there was to be no representation for workers in the industry.

The Transport and General Workers' Union was uniformly hostile. John Cliff, National Secretary of the Road Passenger Transport Section, attacked Morrison's ideas when they surfaced in the form of a T.U.C. Report at the 1932 Congress;

"What have the General Council done in dealing with this question? They offer us Whitleyism. The only offer to Labour under a socialized industry is Whitleyism...I have had experience of Whitleyism and made the best possible use of it, but however vague the ideas of Labour may be, Labour is certain what it wants. It wants power."⁸⁹

This comment is ironic in the light of Cliff's general

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

admiration for Whitleyism in the tram industry, he had been Secretary of the Union side of the National Joint Industrial Council from the beginning.

Harold Clay, who took over John Cliff's job, after Cliff joined the new Board, was more radical. The only prominent union official in the Socialist League, Clay devoted his efforts to attacking the Morrisonian concept of nationalisation. At the 1932 Labour Party Conference he began to develop ideas of workers control in industry.⁹⁰ Ridiculing the notion that the interests of the employees of the new board were on a par with consumers and therefore not worthy of special representation, he denied that the disagreement between them was a fine one;

"That is not so. It is deep and fundamental. It arises from two different conceptions of the meaning and purpose of socialism."

Clay thought that "...under these changed conditions [socialisation of industry] we visualise a new motive pervading industry, and from that we postulate a definite change in the attitude of those who render service within industry. If such is not the case, what hope have we from socialism?"⁹¹ It is hard not to conclude that Clay hoped this 'new motive' would reduce the endemic strike activity of the bus workers. This wish, he shared with Morrison who thought that "...strikes and lock-outs in socialized industries are not a pleasing prospect."⁹²

Where should this new motive come from? What should change the attitude of the employee of a socialized industry? The fact that

"not less than one half..[of the new board]..should be chosen from persons put forward by the Trade Unions representing the workers engaged in that industry.."

Further, at depot level committees of management and unions should

"...have responsibility for the selection of foremen, supervisors etc...the essential thing is that there should be a measure of responsibility on the part of

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

those holding supervisory positions to those subject to their orders and not alone to those in positions of greater authority."

Morrison too proposed an extension of workers control but in a more restricted form;

"Within reason, chances and risks must be taken, possibly for defined experimental periods, but I suggest nothing is lost if we keep in mind the socialist principle that the purpose of socialism is the social good of all, and not only economic advantage for the work people employed in a particular industry; and secondly, that the principles of workers control should only be applied up to the point that the workers are reasonably fitted and equipped wholly or partly to discharge the functions of control."⁹³

Clay's scheme undoubtedly went further than Morrison's, however lurking in the background we find that;

"...socialised industry ought to be more efficient than capitalist industry.... Our critics cannot make that an issue, for we, too, believe in efficiency.."

The question of efficiency was critical. In London, despite overwhelming opposition from the bus crews, the Combine, shortly to become 'socialised' proposed an increase in speed in return for not proceeding with a scheme to worsen conditions. Here was socialised 'efficiency' which Clay supported. Clay's '...two different conceptions of the meaning and purpose of socialism...' were united ultimately in the proposition of 'efficiency'. Neither Morrison nor Clay were proposing that the bus workers could actually run the buses or the tram workers the trams, indeed Morrison was scathing about this '...buses for the busmen and dust for the dustmen stuff..⁹⁴. Instead, Morrison proposed consultation and Clay suggested that workers should be given rights to sanction certain appointments. Within the framework of the London Passenger Transport Board, the same individuals remained in control, the industry was to be saddled with the costs of socialisation, whilst the Board was obliged to break even. This left very little to consult about. Even in socialized industry, the labour process was not to be transformed as a result of legislation. Workers in the industry were to receive no more control over the labour

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

process or supervision within it than they already had under the old Combine. Once again state intervention favoured the Combine.

4 : The Provincial Bus Industry

With the majority of tramways in local authority ownership by the early 1900's and with the crisis of tramway finances during and after the first world war which persuaded the largest private company, B.E.T., to abandon tramway operation, the biggest sphere for private capital expansion was inter-urban and rural bus services. The development of these services is well documented⁹⁵. Between 1916 and 1930 the industry expanded massively, in 1916 there were 331 operators with a capital of £9,000,000, by 1930 there were 3,962 operators with £55,000,000 capital⁹⁶. The First World War served to increase the supply of skilled labour, both drivers and mechanics, whilst the shortage of vehicles diminished in the early 1920's. In 1920 the total company bus fleet was around 8,000 vehicles. By 1924/5 this had risen to just over 20,000 and by 1930/1 to just under 40,000. By comparison, in the same three years the municipal bus fleet was about 500 rising to 1,000 and rising again to 5,000.⁹⁷ The municipal bus fleet was thus 6.25%, 5% and 12.5% of the company fleet in those same three years.

4a : The Structure of the Provincial Bus Industry

Tillings pioneering efforts in setting up the Folkstone and District Road Car Company by simply driving a few vehicles down there in April 1914 was typical. These were soon merged with two other companies belonging to the British Automobile Traction Company (B.A.T.), the Bus arm of B.E.T., and the Deal and District undertaking to form in 1916 the East Kent Road Car Company. B.A.T. rapidly developed or acquired subsidiaries in Scotland, the North

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

East, South Wales and the Home Counties.⁹⁸

B.E.T.'s investments in B.A.T. doubled in 1920 alone from £150,000 to £300,000. Why were buses so attractive? Mr. Garcke, at the 1921 A.G.M. thought that;

"The business...does not exist to any extent in running omnibuses in towns, but in connecting up towns, and picking up to a large extent fares from the country districts between these towns. It is not a speculative business in any way. It is not even as speculative as a tramway. When you build a tramway, you do not know what the results are going to be, but when you have built it, if it is not a success you have to continue to work it until it is a success, but in this omnibus business you start your buses upon a certain route, and if they do not pay you simply take them off that route, and very little harm has been done."⁹⁹

B.E.T. set up the Provincial Omnibus Owners Association in 1913 and this body formed a forum in which company spheres of interest could be delineated. Thus in 1917 Tillings and B.E.T. carved up Kent and Sussex between the East Kent Road Car Company, Southdown Motor Services Ltd.¹⁰⁰ and the Maidstone and District Company. The 'area agreement' allowed both companies and their associates to consolidate their position within an area without the fear of another large competitor moving in. Thus in any one area competition could always be forced out or into agreement, as Tillings and B.A.T. could both afford to underprice their operations until the competitor withdrew. Thus from the earliest days of the provincial bus industry, it was dominated by the interests of the two largest operators.

Tillings also set up companies jointly with B.A.T. to rationalise a particular area of operations. Thus in August 1919 the Eastern Counties Road Car Company was set up at Ipswich. Tillings formed the Ribble Motor Services Company in 1919 and in 1920 the B.A.T. subsidiary at Preston was absorbed. In July 1920 Thames Valley Traction was formed to take over B.A.T.'s Reading operation, and when B.A.T. expanded Bournemouth and District Motor Services Ltd. into

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

Hants and Dorset Motor Services, Tillings took a share in the new operation. The two companies operated as an oligopoly especially after Tillings acquired shares in B.A.T. itself in 1922.

The following extract from Tillings 1928 A.G.M. demonstrates how these two companies operated;

"It is probably within the knowledge of most of the shareholders that this company has for many years held a large part of the capital of many leading omnibus companies in the provinces, and in all such companies the British Automobile Traction Company Ltd. has owned a similar or larger amount of capital. Several years ago your company also acquired a considerable holding in the B.A.T.Co. itself, and nominated two of your directors to the Board of that company. The position had thus become somewhat anomalous, your company having a direct interest in the undertakings, as well as an indirect one through the company named. It has therefore been arranged that the capital of B.A.T. Co. Ltd shall be increased and its name changed to Tillings & B.A.T. Ltd., the latter company issuing shares to us in exchange for our shares in the provincial omnibus companies, and we nominating four of your directors to the Board of Tilling & B.A.T. Ltd., the present chairman Mr Sydney E. Garcke to remain in that capacity. This arrangement has also provided the last named company with the opportunity of acquiring a large number of shares in other Provincial Omnibus Companies from B.E.T. Co. Ltd., which company will increase its already large interest in the reconstituted undertaking. It will thus be apparent that not only does this scheme remove the apparent anomaly referred to, thereby making for greater efficiency, but it spreads your companies investments even wider than in the past. Moreover it is interesting to note that the combination of B.E.T. Co. Ltd. and Thomas Tilling Ltd. will be responsible for operating between 4,000 and 5,000 omnibuses and coaches - probably a larger number than operated by any other company in the world." 101

Thus Tillings and B.E.T. operated through a Joint Holding Company in which each held shares, and which in turn held shares in virtually every major bus company in the country.

The Tilling and B.A.T. combine, though by far the largest, was not the only sizeable company to emerge during this period. Others included; Crosville, United Automobile Services, the National Electric Construction Company and the

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

National Omnibus and Transport Company. These companies also operated territorial agreements such as in 1924 between Northern General (B.E.T.) and United Automobile Services (U.A.S.) Each of these companies was expanding rapidly, From 1923 to 1926 the U.A.S. fleet doubled in size, as one history puts it;

"Territorially, United's main aim in the early post-war years was to close the gap between its entirely separate businesses in East Anglia and the North East. It concentrated on Lincolnshire where an interest was obtained in the Clowne based firm of W.T.Underwood in 1923. Four years later, after another local business had been purchased, the two were formed into a new company, East Midland Motor Services Ltd...At the same time the tentacles of business began to stretch from Teeside down the Yorkshire Coast..."¹⁰²

4b : The Restructuring of the Industry

In the decade after the General Strike the bus industry was restructured as a result of increasing state intervention and regulation and the concentration and centralisation of capital. This took two forms. In the provincial bus industry, following legislation in 1928, the four Railway Companies invested heavily in Tillings and B.E.T. resulting in monopoly control of the industry. This was reinforced by the 1930 Road Traffic Act which allowed the two interconnected combines to consolidate their position.

The fleet controlled by B.E.T. expanded from 951 vehicles in 1924 to 5,190 vehicles in 1929¹⁰³, as a proportion of the recorded total company fleet this represented a growth from about 4.6% to 13.6%. The total vehicles controlled by companies with a fleet size of more than fifty in 1928 increased from 7,646 in 1928 to 14,198 in 1939. In 1928 Tillings and B.E.T. controlled 4,002 of these, in 1939 they controlled virtually all of them. Table Five from which these figures are derived, details the structure of the company sector. Of the forty two largest companies all but

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

----- **TABLE SIX** -----

CONTROL OF LARGEST TERRITORIAL COMPANIES¹⁰⁴
(WITH FLEET SIZE OVER 50 IN 1928)

(year) = Date Acquired by Tillings/B.E.T

	FLEET SIZE	
	1928	1939
<u>TILLING & B.A.T. CO. -</u>		
Aldershot & District Traction Co.	193	291
Cumberland Motor Services Ltd.	81	145
East Kent Road Car Co.	291	544
East Yorkshire Motor Services Ltd.	84	216
Eastern Counties Road Car Company Ltd.	78	601
Hants & Dorset Motor Services Ltd.	103	300
Lincolnshire Road Car Company Ltd.	60	299
Maidstone & District Motor Services Ltd.	275	551
North West Road Car Company Ltd.	208	552
Ortona Motor Company Ltd.	63	Note a
Ribble Motor Services Ltd.	281	1,055
Southdown Motor Services Ltd.	362	734
Thames Valley Traction Ltd.	137	192
Trent Motor Traction Ltd.	150	365
West Yorkshire Road Car Co. Ltd.	243	354
Wrexham & District Transport Company Ltd	71	Note b
Yorkshire Traction Company Ltd.	132	287
<u>BRITISH ELECTRIC TRACTION CO. LTD. -</u>		
Birmingham and Midland Motor Omnibus Co.	600	1,458
Northern General Transport Co. Ltd.	266	445
The Potteries Electric Traction Company	103	213
South Wales Transport Company Ltd.	144	322
Yorkshire (Woolen District) Ltd.	77	286
<u>NATIONAL ELECTRIC CONSTRUCTION GROUP -</u>		
Devon General Omnibus & Touring Co. Ltd.	126 (1931)	240
City of Oxford Motor Services Ltd.	97 (1931)	185
Rhondda Tramways Company Ltd.	52 (1931)	137
<u>OTHERS -</u>		
Great Western Railway	276 (1928)	Note c
Autocar Services Ltd.	86	Note d
Barton Transport Ltd.	85	140
Bristol Tramways & Carriage Co.	350 (1931)	859
Brooks Bros. White Rose Motor Services.	83 (1930)	Note e
Crosville Motor Co.	300 (1930)	1,458
East Surrey Traction Company Ltd.	148	Note d
O. & C. Holdsworth (Hebble)	61 (1930)	71
Lancashire United Transport Ltd.	129	223
National Omnibus & Transport Co. Ltd.	732 (1931)	Note f
Redcar Services Ltd.	65 (1935)	Note g
Silver Queen Motor Omnibus Company.	70 (1930)	Note h
Sunderland District Omnibus Company.	58 (193?)	89
United Automobile Services Ltd.	500 (1928)	972
United Counties Omnibus & Road Traction.	100 (1931)	247
West Riding Automobile Company Ltd.	243	255
Westcliffe-on-Sea Motor Services Ltd.	83 (1935)	112

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

five came under the control of B.E.T. and Tillings, mostly by 1931. Of the five remaining, two became part of the L.G.O.C. Table Six details the dates of acquisition by Tillings and B.E.T. of these other companies.

In 1928 the four main line railway companies were granted permission to operate buses and to invest in the industry. This should be contrasted with the refusal of Parliament to grant operating powers to local authorities, notably the L.C.C. in 1919, Croyden Corporation in 1925 and Bradford Corporation in 1927¹⁰⁵. Bagwell suggests that this investment was unwise¹⁰⁶. The result of the four Railway (Road Transport Acts) of 1928 was to begin a scramble for control of the bus industry. Hibbs¹⁰⁷ gives details of the attempt by the London Midland Scottish (L.M.S.) and London and North Eastern Railways (L.N.E.R.), to wrest control of the industry from B.E.T. and Tillings by purchasing firstly Crosville and then U.A.S. As can be seen from Table Six, it was possible at that time for some other group based on U.A.S., Crosville, Lancashire United and the National Omnibus and Transport Company Ltd. to emerge in a commanding position in the industry. As so often in transport history, a compromise was made. In this case between J.R. Heaton of Tillings and the railways which allowed the railways no more than 49% of the shares of any individual company. Railway money was decisive in allowing Tillings and B.E.T. to tighten their grip. As B.E.T.'s house history records;

"In 1928 the main-line railways obtained powers to operate buses - a development which might have proved very formidable for the B.E.T. However the railway companies decided not to use their powers in competition with established omnibus concerns and agreement was reached between B.E.T. and the various railway companies for a co-ordination of road passenger services with railway services."¹⁰⁸

The 1928 entry of railway capital was one of the most decisive events in the history of the bus industry, far more important than the 1930 Road Traffic Act which has had so much attention. The point can be made still more forcibly be

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

looking at B.E.T.'s growth which demonstrates that the years 1924 to 1929 were far more important for the development of bus operation than the subsequent five years during which the Road Traffic Act was passed. This is shown in Table Seven which also compares B.E.T.'s bus and tram operations.

----- TABLE SEVEN -----

OPERATING STATISTICS FOR THE B.E.T. GROUP : 1919-39 10 ⁹				
YEAR	TRAMWAY/RAILWAY		OMNIBUS	
	TRACK MILES	PASSENGERS	VEHICLES	PASSENGERS
1919	236	225,737,423	395	26,364,170
1924	207	167,466,009	951	86,016,358
1929	107	99,955,277	5,190	472,587,567
1934	64	67,377,064	7,069	725,592,913
1939	18	29,816,569	9,226	1,073,943,954

Thus through the injection of railway capital into the industry B.E.T. and Tillings, through their subsidiary Tillings & B.A.T. Co., came to control the decisive section of the bus industry. At the same time, the Scottish Motor Traction Company became the decisive bus operator in Scotland. As yet, the municipal investments in public transport were concentrated in tram operations.

The 1930 Road Traffic Act allowed the major bus companies controlled by Tillings and B.E.T., either directly or through Tillings & B.A.T. Ltd., to use the influx of railway capital to purchase competitors now that entry into the industry was harder. Even the evidence put forward by John Hibbs shown in Table Eight which shows how the territorial companies increased their rate of acquisition, dates the change of this increase not after the 1930 Act but after the entry of railway capital.

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

----- **TABLE EIGHT** -----
 PROPORTION OF ACQUISITIONS BEFORE AND AFTER THE 1930
 ROAD TRAFFIC ACT. 110

COMPANY	% OF COMPANIES PURCHASED		TOTAL PURCHASED
	1920-8	1929-39	
Aldershot & District	44	56	10>20
Birmingham & Midland	3	97	170>
Crosville	20	80	90>100
North Western Road Car	16	84	50
Potteries Motor Traction	10	90	20
Ribble Motor Services	22	78	70>80

4c : Restructuring Under Monopoly Control

How did the entry of railway capital affect the industry? Crosville, taken over by the L.M.S. Railway is a good example. Crosville immediately bought three companies `..at prices which were way out of proportion to their value and which hung rather a dead load of capital on to us in the form of goodwill...` In the case of the Mona Maroon company; `most of their vehicles entirely unsuitable or unserviceable. The stocks of spares were obsolete. Tyres were bad and the whole concern was on its last legs unless a lot of money was spent on it at once.` The U.N.U. Motor Services were in similar fettle; `...The buses were, of course, in a dreadful state`. Brooke Brothers were acquired only to find that `...Vehicles had been let go as regards maintenance. It appeared that we would have to spend £3,000 at once on tyres alone.` It was railway money which allowed Crosville to purchase and refurbish these companies.¹¹¹

Another example of the effects of the injection of railway money is the B.M.M.O. Company (Midland Red). The holding company controlling Midland Red, the Birmingham & District Investment Trust (itself ultimately controlled by B.E.T.) allotted 30% of its shares to the L.M.S. Railway and 20% to the Great Western, under the agreement between

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

Tillings & B.A.T. and the four Railway Companies¹¹². The result of this transaction effectively funded the takeover of Black and White Motorways Ltd. of Cheltenham. As one company history puts it;

"Black & White had been formed into a limited liability company in 1928, but lack of capital curbed the company's expansion, with the result that operating difficulties brought about the sale for approximately £100,000 for the business as a going concern complete with its assets, goodwill and liabilities."¹¹³

This company together with other railway purchases such as City of Oxford Motor Services and Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company began the basis of the inter-company agreements which quickly came to dominate the long distance coach operations in England and Wales, under the name of Associated Motorways. Thus again the effects of the injection of railway capital are already visible before the Road Traffic Act became operational. Midland Red in the 1930's purchased about 150 small companies to consolidate a huge area of central England and parts of Wales. These purchases took place as the growth of the industry slowed down and the territorial companies consolidated their position.

In the case of the National Omnibus & Transport Company there are details available of the pace of this consolidation. An agreement with the Great Western Railway in December 1928 led to the splitting up of the National into area companies reflecting the operational areas of the railway companies whose own bus operations were then merged. Thus Western National was the result of the amalgamation of the the Great Western and National's West Country interests, Southern National of National and the Southern Railway etc. National Omnibus and Transport remained the holding company, though the railway companies had minority share holdings, until it was purchased by Tillings in May 1931. Once this restructuring had taken place, Western and Southern National began to purchase smaller companies throughout the 1930's. The rate of acquisition was fastest in 1933 and 1935, the

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

number of companies purchased in each year was as follows; 1930 two companies, 1931 four companies, 1932 four companies, 1933 twenty six companies, 1934 six companies, 1935 eighteen companies, 1936 eleven companies, 1937 seven companies, 1938 six companies, 1939 four companies. Significantly from 1945 to 1978 only thirteen companies were purchased¹¹⁴.

This rush of acquisitions, paid for with railway money on the whole and possible through the protection of the Traffic Commissioners who would act in favour of existing license holders, was part of a process of consolidation. John Hibbs commented that `...What the system did was to prevent the entry of new capital and initiative to the field of regular service operation¹¹⁵. In an earlier work he writes that the licensing system was `...a policy of protection of existing investment..at the expense of technical progress [and]... the choice of the consumer...¹¹⁶ Neither of these criticisms are justifiable. There is no doubt that the territorial companies began to consolidate their areas, but they did this precisely by the use of new capital which was applied to these newly acquired little companies not at the expense of technical progress but in order to achieve it, in order to ensure adequate returns on their investments. Far from restricting technical progress, the restructuring of the industry from 1927 to 1931 created the conditions for both the intensification of the labour process and the growth of a far more more professional management.

4d : The Growth of Professional Management and Changes in the Labour Process.

The managers of the 1920's and 1930's came mostly from an engineering background. John Hibbs provides an interesting table of some well known figures reproduced below. The importance of the tram industry shows through clearly in this list, as Hibbs comments, electrical engineering was the

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

senior profession in the industry. The technical difficulties which almost overcame the bus industry in the early days of mechanisation are reflected in the preponderance of engineers in this list. It was only later that accounting and other skills became more important. As Norman Dean, manager of Hebble and then in association with B.E.T. manager of Yorkshire Traction Company comments;

"...most managers of bus undertakings reach their position by promotion from the Traffic or Engineering Departments."¹¹⁷

----- **TABLE NINE** -----

PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND OF A SELECTION OF MANAGERS ACTIVE IN THE BUS INDUSTRY 1920-30.¹¹⁸

NAME	PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND/EARLY TRAINING
J. Amos	Apprentice Carpenter; Entrepreneur
R. Beveridge	Railway Apprentice
R.W. Birch	Engineering
G. Cardwell	Electrical Engineering
F.J. Chapple	Electrical Engineering
C.Crosland-Taylor	Engineering
J.C. Dean	Motor Engineering
E.H. Edwardes	Electrical Engineering
E.B. Hutchinson	Railway Trainee
W.T. James	Entrepreneur
S. Kennedy	Electrical Engineering
J. Petrie	Electrical Engineering
C.H. Preece	Motor Engineering
L.G. Wyndham-Shire	Engineering
J.C. Sword	Entrepreneur
E.L. Taylor	Accountancy
W.S. Wreathall	Secretarial

The technical skills required to ensure the operation of the machinery were far advanced beyond those required to organise the work. In a commonly quoted passage, Crosland-Taylor recalls;

"The technique of starting a route was amazingly simple. First of all we travelled over it in a car and decided the places of the fare stages and their mileage. Then we worked out the time table and fare table for one bus, say three or four trips on a week day and a late one on Saturday, allowing times for meals for the crew. Handbills were printed announcing the dates of starting and details of service. These were distributed at every house within half a mile of the route and at the appointed hour the service was launched and very soon made use of. It was just as easy

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

as that. The bus crew kept the same vehicle as far as possible. They cleaned it too and because it was theirs and they were always with it the public got to know the whole outfit. How different times are now!" 119

The growth in the scale of the Crosville Company resulted in the gradual development of several features of management structure which became a common feature of all bus companies. Technical problems were the first major management headache and thus as early as 1911 the company had a chief engineer, whereas the first full-time accountant was not appointed until 1930. This appointment was connected with the L.M.S. takeover. The Road Traffic Act was instrumental in the creation of a secretarial department which dealt with wages, licensing and the planning and production of timetables. Gradually the structure solidified into a central secretarial department, a traffic department run by the traffic manager in charge of divisional managers based at the depots, and an engineering management structure.¹²⁰ Above this relatively decentralised structure was the centralised financial management of Tillings. B.E.T. and Tillings seem to have interfered little in the running of companies provided they were sufficiently profitable.¹²¹

The introduction of the accountant as a result of railway takeover was enormously significant because it was the first stage in developing tight financial control over operations. As Norman Dean recalls;

"...It was not until 1st. January 1930 that the railways took control of Hebble...The change was very marked indeed. The railway accountants made their presence felt... the vehicle maintenance and overhaul programme had to follow the pattern and procedure used by the railways in respect of their fleet of goods vehicles..."¹²²

B.E.T. copied railway systems of managerial control. These had developed enormously during the wartime control of the railways and railway thinking dominated the Ministry of Transport.¹²³ The Ministry founded the Institute of Transport in 1919, partly, it would seem, in order to promote more scientific methods in management.

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

4e : Scientific Management of the Labour Process.

With the effective abolition of the competitive market, bus companies were able to turn their attention to controlling costs and intensifying labour. The growth in managerial control through the use of strict accounting methods enabled attention to be focused on one of the biggest components of operating costs; labour costs. In London the establishment of a monopoly of bus transport allowed the development of much stricter controls over the labour process itself, these were directly imported 'American Methods'. As Chandler and Cheape pointed out, Yerkes experience of mass transit in America derived directly from the managerial methods of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company¹²⁴. It was these experiences and management skills that he applied to the London Underground Electric Railway Company and which were subsequently extended to the L.G.O.C. Once the territorial companies reached the same dominant market position, and as a direct consequence of the introduction of railway management methods the same application of scientific management methods can be detected.

The competitive phase of the provincial bus industry was accompanied by the extension of the working day, the use of adolescent labour and extremely low wages. Scheduling was unimportant and control over labour non-existent. As Crosland-Taylor recalls at Crosville in the 1920's;

"A conductor, for instance, was given tickets and a fare list and told to get on with it. A driver was given a time-table and provided he could change gear, had to make his way as best he could..."¹²⁵

The 1930 Road Traffic Act changed all this. Services had to be run to timetables and these timings had to be realistic for the service to remain reliable. Driving hours were limited and set constraints on the scheduling of work. A Fair Wages clause and crew licensing ended the use of cheap

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

labour, especially of adolescents. Secondly, the creation of a monopoly position meant that efficiency could no longer be set by the market but had to be monitored by management. Rather than simply offer services in competition with other bus companies, services could now be arranged to maximise passenger carryings and minimise labour costs. Efficient use of labour would increase profits. In the 1930's the territorial Companies applied themselves to this matter. Norman Dean, unwittingly confirms this with his proud boast that in Hebble '...passengers carried' increased by over 50% between 1933 and 1939 and mileage by 24%¹²⁷ Let us look at this process in more detail in Crosville.

Crosland-Taylor recalls;

"At the same time in 1930 and 1931 there was a grand field for reorganisation and a golden opportunity to take advantage of the savings that were dangling under our noses because of the North Wales amalgamations...

One of the principle items of expenditure is the wages of the platform crews. For every 100 hours paid the wheels were only turning for about 70 hours. This was disasterous. For some depots the figure was 60 hours and even less."¹²⁸

The key thing then, was to reorganise the use of labour to increase efficiency;

"Running speeds were all over the place, some too fast, many more too slow...Time tables had been planned with no regard for waiting time, and duties were set out in different ways at every depot. There were no reliable statistics and I found the whole problem a fascinating area of study for many months."

For many months! John Hibbs ascribes the growth in management as a product of the licensing requirements of the 1930 Act. Far more time-consuming at Crosville was the study of work organisation;

"Every month the figures improved until the average running speed was 15 m.p.h.(including intermediate stops) and out of every hundred hours paid the wheels turned for nearly 80 instead of 70."

The significant intensification of labour was the key aspect of the monopolisation of the territorial areas; '...We fought for every hundredth of a penny a mile - and

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

why? - because it meant a saving of £1,250 per annum. Holding down labour costs was vital, something to be fought for, was it because wages were too high? Compared to the hundreds of firms paying wages below the territorials rates, they were indeed too high. Nevertheless, even Crosland-Taylor himself realises that `...It was not a question of the rate paid per hour, though that was low enough in all conscience at some of the Welsh Depots.'

Having tackled the central question of productivity in terms of work organisation, Crosville then turned attention to increasing revenue around 1935,

"...We were to attack the revenue side of the business at last. Any reasonable cost of doing it would be allowed. There would be the maximum of new vehicles and the standard of maintainance of all assetts would be improved. Publicity was to be completely overhauled, and on top of that all services were to be reviewed twice a year." 129

In other words, labour efficiency was the first priority, the market came afterwards. The impact of these changes are visible on Crosville's Balance Sheet which shows the effects of these two strategies on the profits per car mile. The steady decline being arrested in the mid-1930's.

Conclusion

By the mid-1930's the pattern of the industry in terms of technology, ownership, state regulation and control and management structure was largely fixed. The industry had reached 'maturation' in Abernathy's terminology. New technology in the tram industry had led to a largely municipal monopoly, in the bus industry the monopoly was mostly private. Competition had been largely eliminated through cooperation, amalgamation and takeover and new competition was prevented by the 1924 London Traffic Act and

The Development of the Road Passenger Transport Industry

the 1930 Road Traffic Act. It was only after the elimination of competition that work could be intensified and controlled. Competition inhibited such a process because the primary necessity was to match other bus services rather than concentrate on operating larger vehicles on less frequent services with maximum labour efficiency. Thus apart from mechanisation itself, the biggest changes in the labour process took place after the creation of monopoly. In other words with the electrification of tramways, after 1927 in London and in the 1930's in the provincial bus industry. State intervention had consistently, whether carried through by Labour or Conservative governments, favoured the interests of the very largest companies at the expense of small operators and even of local municipal operations and had strengthened the drive to monopoly.

The labour process had been transformed in a number of different ways. Wage-labour had replaced sub-contracting. The workplace became much larger and the garage, shed or depot came to be more like a factory. Extension of the working day to the absolute limits had been replaced by a new intensification of labour. Control over the labour process had also changed. No longer reliant on passenger complaint or journey systems of payment, superintendance had been rationalised with the creation of an Inspectorate applying specific rules rather than despotic whim. The state had also intervened to limit driving hours and require the licensing of crews, vehicles and routes and regular timetabling which also allowed for more exact work scheduling. The creation of large monopolies also required a more professionalised and specialised management, controlled from above by strict financial targets and accountancy procedures. The next chapter will examine the effect of these changes on resistance within the labour process.

Notes - Development of Industry

1. See "The Evolution of Public Transit 1880-1912 : A Study of Three Cities" Charles Cheape IIIrd., PhD. Thesis, Brandeis University, New York, 1977. This thesis examines the evolution of public transit in three cities; New York, Philadelphia and Boston. (Chicago is dealt with in another thesis by Robert D. Weber, "Rationalizers and Reformers : Chicago Local Transportation in the 19th. C., University of Wisconsin, 1971) In each case, reluctantly or not, the City administration was forced, sooner or later to take an active role as private enterprise failed to deliver the necessary quality and capacity of urban public transit.

The thesis points out that some of the entrepreneurs involved, namely Thomas Ryan, Henry & William Witney and Peter Widener, were interested in public transit in order to develop suburban real estate, a motive which B.E.T. did not have as their interests were closely linked to electric power.

These entrepreneurs, according to Cheape, set out to;

(1) Consolidate existing horse operators into a single management.

(2) Adapt the form of ownership developed by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, namely the holding company. (See Chandler 'The Visible Hand')

(3) Adapt the management structure of the Pennsylvania Railroad, i.e. line and staff management and divisional structure. Also they adapted the same fund raising methods using local and national stock exchanges, leases and purchases through exchange of stock to preserve capital and stock watering.

(4) Develop political ties to assist charters, franchises, line extensions and approval of new technology. As Cheape points out; transit promoters '...institutionalised what had earlier been a casual relationship...' Thus '...politics was a crucial element in successful transit entrepreneurship...' Thus the role of the city and state administrations were crucial both in Britain and the U.S.A.

2. Steam traction was first used in 1837 on the New York and Haarlem and also in Trenton, New Jersey and Philadelphia. The use of steam traction posed a number of technical problems. These were;

(i) gaining enough power from an engine small enough to operate on tramlines which led to a significant risk of explosions.

(ii) the problem of steam, sparks and smoke on city streets which could both cause fires and frighten horses causing accidents.

A number of experiments with steam traction failed. In 1864 an engine on Ryde Pier was abandoned due to excessive vibration. In 1872 an engine was built by John Grantham at Oldbury Carriage and Wagon works and tested in Vauxhall. Henry Hughes and Company of Loughborough tested an engine between West Bromwich and Handsworth in the Black Country in 1876. In 1877 the North Metropolitan Company tried a Merryweather Engine between Stratford and Leytonstone in East London. In 1879 Kitson of Leeds, an established engine

Notes - Development of Industry

builder, abandoned an attempt to develop a tramway engine. When electric traction was developed rails, electrical machinery and rolling stock were imported from the U.S.A. This was blamed on municipalisation by Emile Garcke of B.E.T. (See his paper to the National Liberal Club 'The Limitations of Municipal Enterprise' delivered on 24th. October, 1900 and printed in 1902 by P.S. King & Son, Westminster.)

3. The 1879 Act introduced severe restrictions on engine design. Engines were to be governed to a speed of ten miles an hour, all working parts more than four inches above the rail were to be concealed, engines had to operate without blast and exhaust noises, and no visible smoke or steam was permitted. This effectively meant two things; the enclosure of the engine and the addition of a condenser. This meant in practice that because tramway engines tended to be undersized to save capital and working expenses they had to operate at a much higher pressure than main line locomotives, at nearly 200lbs per square inch.

4. See Charles Klapper; "The Golden Age of Tramways" 2cd. Ed. 1974 Newton Abbott, which informs much of this section.

5. The largest steam tramway to emerge was the Manchester, Bury, Oldham and Rochdale Steam Tramway Company with nearly thirty miles of track.

6. Various attempts were made to use stationary steam engines. One of the more eccentric was Middleton's clockwork tram, which it was hoped could travel up to eight miles between windings. More success was achieved with cables, especially where steep gradients presented problems. San Francisco, Highgate Hill in London and Edinburgh were the best known examples. The Edinburgh Northern system involved 13 main cables, the longest being 6.5 miles long, and by 1903 205 eight wheeled double-decked tramcars were in use over 36 miles of tramway. The cables themselves were liable to jamming, stopping the whole system, each car employed a 'gripper' device which sometimes failed to disengage, and finally on sharp corners the car had to disengage from the cable, freewheel around the corner to re-engage the cable. If this operation failed the car would be left stranded possibly blocking the route of all subsequent tramcars. The capital cost of cable systems was enormous. One method of reducing this cost was the transmission of steam power via compressed air, though this method remained a theory.

7. These two systems were the Connolly Oil-Gas motor system used in Blackpool and Neath, and the Tilling designed petrol engines used in Heysham.

8. Three basic systems were tried;

- (a) The 'Third Rail' system,
- (b) The 'Conduit' system,
- (c) The 'Stud' system.

The third rail was employed by Doctor Wiener Von Siemens at the Berlin Trades Exhibition of 1879, which demonstrated for the first time the possibilities of electric traction. However the third rail, being 'live', could only be used on enclosed lines and was therefore generally impractical in

Notes - Development of Industry

cities. The most successful application was in fact the City and South London underground electric railway which opened in 1890. The Conduit system concealed the live rail in a slotted tube, and was the method used for the world's first street electric tramway in Blackpool opened in 1885. This development was significant because the tramway not only demonstrated the practical use of electric traction, but also the importance of municipal funding. The scheme only reached fruition because the high capital costs were met by Blackpool Corporation, unlike an earlier scheme on Brighton Beach which failed partly for this reason. There were problems with the conduit system which like the cable system was liable to blockage, necessitating either frequent stoppages or high maintenance costs. The stud system was really developed to its fullest potential by the London County Council and relied on the tramcar contacting a series of concealed studs as it passed overhead, each stud having a self-concealing mechanism to protect other street users. All three ground systems suffered the same basic problem, which was either too low a voltage to be effective or too high to be safe.

9. An intermediate solution was provided by an overhead slotted tube enclosing a shuttle connected to a tramcar, this method being employed in Paris in 1881. 'Trollers' were invented in the early 1880's, these were contraptions which ran on overhead cables, or more correctly rolled along them, connecting to the car by cable. These were not trouble free, as Charles Klapper relates (op. cit. p. 62); one particular troller aptly named Daft's Patent Troller dropped on the head of a Municipal Inspector during a safety check.

British developments followed on rapidly from these discoveries and in 1891 the first overhead trolley wire system was built in Leeds by International Thomas-Houston. Unfortunately the overhead cable was single and the use of an earth return led to litigation by the National Telephone Company. Another system in Bradford failed due to a poor electricity generator design. See P.S. Bagwell, "The Transport Revolution" London 1974 B.T. Batsford. p.152.

10. "Black Country Tramways" - J.S. Webb. Published by the author 1974.

11. For details of tramway speculators and financiers see Cheape op. cit., A.D. Chandler - "The Visible Hand - The Managerial Revolution in American Business", Cambridge, Mass. M.I.T. Press. For a British and autobiographical example see - "Leaves from my Life" - Henry Osborne O'Hagen. John Lane - London 1929. in which he describes himself as a 'famous speculator' and 'city entrepreneur'. O'Hagen was responsible for raising the finance for a number of tramways in the Potteries, the West Metropolitan in Acton (London), the South Staffordshire in Birmingham and the Manchester, Bury, Heywood, Rochdale & Oldham Steam Tramways Company. There are also some hilarious, if probably unrepresentative accounts of municipal bargaining on pp. 69-70.

12. This table comes from Webb and is quoted from a book by Kinnear-Clark called "Tramways : Their Construction and

Notes - Development of Industry

Working".

13. Mr. J. Clifton-Robinson in a Report summarised in the Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen Quarterly Report, 10th. June, 1899.

14. According to Webb op. cit. the South Staffordshire was near bankruptcy before B.E.T.'s takeover. Mr. S.L. Schuster, the Chairman recounted at the A.G.M. in May 1898 that he had approached five leading finance houses and 'not one of them would touch it..'. B.E.T.'s takeover allowed the first dividend of any sort to be paid, namely 2.75% on preference shares.

15. Walsall purchased its lines on January 1st. 1901 and leased them back to the South Staffordshire, West Bromwich purchased in 1903 and leased the tracks for twenty one years. Dudley followed suit in 1909 leasing for thirty years, and both Birmingham and Wolverhampton took over the tracks with the intention of operating themselves. The network of services was produced not by B.E.T. but through a joint committee set up by interested parties in 1904. Webb op. cit.

16. "The First Five Decades of B.E.T." - Roger Fulford 1946. p.12.

17. Table derived from "The Rise and Fall of Municipal Transport" - J.Sleeman in the Scottish Journal of Political Economy No.9 1962.

The Table is undated but appears to be for the year 1900. Alternative figures are quoted in "Victorian Cities" - Asa Briggs, Penguin, Harmondsworth 1968 [1st.Ed.1963] as follows; from Cmnd.305 'Joint Select Committee on Municipal Trading' 1900 gives 61 Local Authority and 89 private tramways, this appears in the above as a footnote on page fifteen.

18. There are two reasons for this underestimation:

(i) The largest systems with the exception of London were municipal; Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Leeds, and even in London itself the London County Council and other borough authorities owned the majority of tramways.

(ii) Of the private companies many were actually owned by B.E.T. which operated through holding companies in Oldham, Southport, Hartlepool, Gateshead, Tynemouth, Peterborough, Cambridge, Croydon, Brighton, Devenport, Grenock, Stoke-on-Trent, and the West Midlands. By 1906 B.E.T. owned 15% of all tramways in the U.K. or 60% of all private tramways.

19. "A History of London Transport" - T.C. Barker and Michael Robbins. George, Allen & Unwin. London 1974. Volume 2. p. 99.

20. Ibid. Vol. 2. pp. 21-34 and 85-118.

21. Ibid. p. 99.

22. Ibid. p. 102.

23. Quoted in "The Liverpool Tramwaymen's Agitation of 1889" Eric L. Taplin, in "Building the Union - Studies in the Growth of the Workers Movement", Toulouse Press, Liverpool, 1973. pp. 56-7.

24. Ibid. p. 60.

Notes - Development of Industry

25. "Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage" - Clementina Black, Duckworths, London, 1907. pp.100-101.

26. The Census of 1911 Volume X Table XIV gives the following figures;

Tramwaymen employed by Local Authorities ...31,832 in 1911
Tramwaymen employed by private companies ...10,171 in 1911.

27. New York as well as London kept trams out of the centre of the city;

"Yet in New York and in centres of other great American Cities the authorities maintained an opposition to overhead wires which had originally been aroused by the unruly activities of electric lighting and telephone companies some years before. New York, for instance, actually removed more than 5,000 street poles and over 7,000 miles of wire during 1891. It did not take kindly to the idea of permitting more wires to be put up, particularly over the main streets." See Barker & Robbins - Volume II pp.18-19.

28. The earliest experiment was by Trevithick & Vivian who constructed a steam coach in Felton's workshops in Leather Lane, London in 1803 without success. Sir Goldsworth Gurney built several steam cars which were used by Sir Charles Dance in the famous service between Cheltenham and Gloucester for four months in 1831 carrying 3,000 passengers. Walter Hancock produced a ten seater, known as 'The Infant' in 1830 which operated from Stratford to London in 1831, this model was succeeded by the eighteen seater 'The Era' built for the newly formed London & Paddington Steam Carriage Company, but operations only lasted a few days probably due to the financial incompetence of the operators. Other vehicles followed; 'The Autopsy' operated around Finsbury Park, and was joined by the twenty two seater 'Automaton' in 1836. In 1840 the Turnpike Acts were enforced and operation became unremunerative, due to higher tolls and the liability for damage to the road. John Scott Russell, the designer of the 'Great Eastern' steamship, built a vehicle to operate between Paisley and Glasgow but a tragic accident caused mainly by the Turnpike authority spreading stones over the road led to a wheel breakage, in turn causing the vehicle to overturn and the boiler to burst killing five people. Court action against Russell and the rigid enforcement of the Turnpike Laws prevented any further developments for twenty years. See "The Golden Age of Buses" - Charles F. Klapper London, Routledge, Kegan Paul 1978.

29. Compared to the massive investment in tramway electrification, the total public issue for the entire British road vehicle industry was only £264,000 between 1899 and 1904. Meanwhile in France during the 1890's Renault, Peugeot and Michelin were founded, as well as Panhard and Levassor who made gearbox transmission and steam vehicle manufacturers Bollee, De Dion-Bouton and Leon Serpollet. In Germany Daimler and Benz had already produced petrol driven cycles. The only British manufacturer was Thorneycroft together with partners Sumner and Spurrier who set up the Lancashire Steam Car Company at Leyland in 1896.

Notes - Development of Industry

30. Noteable examples were Radcliffe-Ward's electric accumulator bus built in 1897, which had a maximum speed of 7 m.p.h. The London Steam Omnibus Company established by Lawson in 1898, the biggest such venture in London, quickly failed.

31. The 1906 accident occurred on Handcross Hill on the road between London and Brighton. The new Metropolitan Police Regulations reduced the maximum weight from 5 tons to 3.5 tons, limited speed to 12 m.p.h. and introduced a catch all phrase that the construction, form and general appearance must fit the Metropolitan Police Commissioners wishes.

32. Tillings bought their first Milnes-Daimlers in 1904. Hibbs estimates these were the most popular in 1906 whilst Klapper suggests that Straker-Squires became the most numerous in 1907. Hibbs estimated the composition of the London Petrol Bus Fleet as follows;

Milnes-Daimlers (175), Straker-Squires (101), De-Dions (52), Durkopps (27), Others (including Stirlings/Brillies/Leylands) (39). From "A History of British Bus Services" - John Hibbs, David & Charles, Newton Abbott 1968. See chapter three. See also Klapper op. cit. p. 68. and Bagwell(1974)

33. Barker and Robbins, Volume II p.133.

34. "The First Five Decades of B.E.T." - Roger Fulford. London 1948. p.60.

35. Barker and Robbins produce the following financial

FINANCIAL RESULTS OF L.G.O.C. AND ROAD CAR COMPANY				
L.G.O.C.	RECEIPTS(£)	PROFIT(£)	DIVIDEND	CAPITAL(£)
1905	1,245,671	65,282	7%	1,073,592
1906	1,204,499	23,571	5.5%	1,203,592
JAN/JUN '07	539,890	-62,679	Nil	1,317,066
JUL '07 TO JUNE '08	1,098,094	-147,253	Nil	1,323,592
ROAD CAR COMPANY				
1905	431,656	51,058	5.6%	593,900
1906	438,751	22,878	2.1%	637,258
1907	449,064	-24,077	Nil	676,000

results for the L.G.O.C. and the Road Car Company from 1905 to June 1908. See Barker & Robbins Vol II, p.134.

36. Present at this meeting were representatives of the Underground Electric Railway of London (U.E.R.L.) and the Metropolitan Railway Company who controlled most of the tube system, the L.G.O.C., the London Road Car Company, Vanguard and Tillings. Pooling agreements were arrangements whereby two or more companies shared a route and pooled the revenue derived from it in proportion to the total mileage operated, though sometimes the proportions were tempered by the effects of each service on other routes operated, the operator who had pioneered the route and so on.

37. The merger was between the London General Omnibus Company, with 288 motor buses and capital of £1,323,592; the London Road Car Company, with 225 motor buses and £676,000

Notes - Development of Industry

capital; and the Vanguard Company with 386 motor buses and capital of £608,000. From Klapper op.cit. p.68.

38. Further agreements between the L.G.O.C. and Tillings followed;

From 1914 Tillings and L.G.O.C. pooled all revenue.

In 1923 Tillings were permitted to operate 5% of the London Fleet above 3,320 at which time Tillings operated 332 buses some of which had been purchased from the L.G.O.C.

In 1925 particular routes were shared out between companies.

In 1929 all the agreements were consolidated.

In 1913 Albert Stanley, later Lord Ashfield, managing director of the L.G.O.C. admitted that Tillings were '...the only people to maintain a vestige of independence'. From his evidence to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Motor Traffic 1913. Taken from "Radical Aristocrats" - Ken Fuller, Lawrence & Wishart, London 1985.

39. The exceptions were the Metropolitan, Great Northern & City, East London and the Waterloo & City Line. The offer consisted of;

For each £100 of L.G.O.C. stock --- £105 of U.E.R.L. 1st. cumulative preference debenture shares, plus £105 of U.E.R.L. income bonds, plus 100 'A' ordinary shares @ 1 shilling (£0.05) plus a further £8. The offer was estimated to be worth £227 per £100 of L.G.O.C. stock.

40. Fulford op. cit. p.51.

41. See Black op. cit. pp. 82-5.

42. 'Licensed Vehicle Trades Record'. July 16th. 1913.

43. Barker & Robbins. Vol. 2. p. 314.

44. Black op. cit. describes the test procedure and then adds; "A certain proportion of these candidates are men who have never driven in the London streets - some of them never on any road whatever. There is a legend of one, said to have originally been a shop assistant, who entered upon his career unaware that he was expected to drive to the left rather than to the right." pp. 89-90.

45. Ibid. pp. 91-2.

46. 'Licensed Vehicle Trades Record' July 16th. 1913.

47. Fulford op. cit. p. 51.

48. "Court of Inquiry into Tramway Wages and Conditions" - 1921.

49. Barker & Robbins pp.234-5.

50. "British Transport" - H.J. Dyos and D.H. Aldcroft, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1974. p. 371.

51. Klapper (1974) pp. 216-7.

52. Dyos & Aldcroft p. 365. The quote is from the West Midlands Traffic Commission.

53. Fulford op. cit. p. 50.

54. Thus Mr. Emile Garcke announced at the Companies A.G.M. in 1920;

"...we have come to the conclusion, therefore, that it will be more profitable to the stockholders in this company to extend the sphere of operations into other departments of enterprise...the gradual realisation of sales to Local Authorities as the dates of purchase approach, and the reinvestment of capital thus realised will, I hope, afford

Notes - Development of Industry

us scope for profitable financial operations in various industrial spheres." Ibid. p. 74.

55. Klapper. (1978) see Appendix 3.

56. According to Barker and Robbins;

"The County Council was driven inevitably into a defensive position - its transport interest, the tramway system, was, if not yet obsolescent, at any rate increasingly weaker economically as electric railways increased their capacity and motor buses improved their technical performance, and its claim to authority as the representative elected body for London was, because of its restricted area, never acceptable in relation to London traffic as a whole..." - Barker and Robbins, op. cit. Vol. 2. p.205.

57. See Ibid. pp. 208-9.

58. Ibid p.209.

59. Thus the L.G.O.C. fleet had expanded rapidly from 1,108 in 1911 to 3,100 in the Summer of 1914, much of the fleet was dispatched to France for the War, leaving only 1,758 buses by 1918. As the L.G.O.C.'s bus manufacturing arm, the Associated Equipment Company Ltd. (A.E.C.) had transferred to lorry manufacture during the War, the immediate shortage was met with converted lorries with canvas hoods and garden seats. A new bus was produced to supercede the old 'B' type with its 34 seats, the 'K' type with 46 seats. This was followed by the 'S' type weighing 8.5 tons and carrying 57 passengers (though the Metropolitan Police only ever licensed the vehicle for 54 passengers). The 'S' type came into service in December 1920, yet even by the end of the following year the fleet had only increased to 2,972 of which only 2,484 were in regular service. Thus the L.G.O.C. had a fleet of less than the 1914 capacity with which to face a new round of competition in a rapidly increasing market.

60. See Klapper (1978)

61. Quoted in "Labour Relations in London Transport" - H.A. Clegg, Blackwell, Oxford 1950. p.25.

62. "On our part, we regret that everyone else seems to refuse to move or act until there is a crisis...but we are resolved that the policy of inaction pursued by the Government...together with the stupid policy of the competitive interests in London shall not be used for the purpose of depressing the standard of life of our members employed by your companies." ("The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin - A. Bullock, Heinemann, London, 1960 p.238.)

As 'The Record' had argued the previous year;

"We...urge our members...both as trade unionists and citizens, to oppose the restitution of competitive omnibus services on the streets of London and to work for the setting up of a single traffic authority under public control." (See 'The Record' December 1923.)

63. Source Barker & Robbins Volume 2.

64. The Interim Report stated that;

"The present crisis has, in the main, arisen through the tramway undertakings in the Metropolitan Area being unable to earn sufficient to meet the claim. This has been brought

Notes - Development of Industry

about by the severe competition of the omnibuses in the absence of any co-ordinating control, by the heavy expenditure on renewals and upkeep of the permanent way at present high costs, and by the discharge of the statutory obligations for the maintenance of the surface of the highways... A definite undertaking by the government to introduce and press forward legislation placing the passenger traffic of the Metropolitan Area under some co-ordinating control affords, in our view, a basis, and the only one at present suggested, for re-opening negotiations between the parties."

From 'Interim Report...' p.5. Quoted in "A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889", Volume 2, H. Clegg, Oxford University Press, 1985. p.372.

65. Barker & Robbins op.cit. pp. 210-11.

66. Thus Barker and Robbins suggest that; '...it would be a mistake to regard progression towards the solution of 1933 as inexorable, as something inherent in the facts of the London situation.' In other words, it would be quite wrong to conclude that the 1924 Act led directly to the 1933 Act which set up London Transport as a public body, or that public regulation leads inevitably to nationalisation. Indeed the 1924 Act was an alternative to public ownership. See Vol. 2. p. 202.

67. The London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee covered an area from Dorking to St. Albans and Gravesend to Slough. The body consisted of eight Local Authority members, two Police representatives, two Government nominees, three Union and four Employer representatives from the industry. See Official Reports 5th Series, Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, 1924. Volume 171 from paras. 1734 - 1743.

68. See evidence by Sir Frank Pick to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee Inquiry into London Traffic quoted in Barker & Robbins.

69. 'The Record' February 1929. The Report appeared in 'Modern Transport' on February 9th. It continued; "They [Motor Buses] are suitable;

- (1) For providing service in areas where the traffic is not such as to warrant the expenditure required for laying the permanent way, such as thinly-populated areas.
- (2) For connecting adjacent industrial areas.
- (3) As feeders to the tramway system.
- (4) To connect the outlying tramway termini."

70. 'The Record' February 1931. The report went on; "We are unable to proscribe any definite period for the extinction of tramways, but we are of the opinion that it will be to the advantage of the inhabitants of the towns where they exist to get rid of them by degree, as some authorities have already done. The substitution of trackless trolley vehicles may ultimately prove to be the best solution in certain cases (or, at all events, it may form an economical transition from the tramcar to the motor omnibus)"

71. The table below shows figures from three different sources for the growth of the municipal sector after 1928.

Notes - Development of Industry

-----TABLE-----

LOCAL AUTHORITIES VEHICLE FLEETS - BUSES AND COACHES 1928/9 TO 1935/6 - VARIOUS SOURCES			
YEAR	MUNICIPAL YEAR BOOK		TRAFFIC COMMISSIONERS
	LIMITED SERIES	OVERALL SERIES	
1928/9	3,340	3,410	-
1929/30	4,030	4,150	-
1930/1	4,570	4,830	-
1931/2	4,870	5,190	5,125
1932/3	5,130	5,390	5,315
1933/4	5,340	5,640	5,483
1934/5	5,740	6,190	5,846
1935/6	5,250	7,020	6,479

Source: D.L. Munby op. cit.

72. See Hibbs (1968) op. cit.

73. "British Transport Since 1914" - D.H. Aldcroft London 1975. p.48.

74. Bagwell (1974) op. cit. p. 227.

75. "Public Control of the British Bus Industry" - S. Glaister and C.M. Mulley. Gower, Aldershot 1983. pp. 21-2.

76. The Committee examined four areas of potential regulation;

(1) Constructional requirements.

(2) Regulations concerning carriage and conduct of passengers, analagous to tram and railway bye-laws.

(3) Regulations concerning the condition of the omnibus from time to time; cleanliness, soundness and efficiency.

(4) Regulations governing the use and operation of omnibuses; routes, services and fares.

Under existing law an omnibus needed not simply registration as a motor car with a revenue license, but also an omnibus license which entitled it to ply for hire from each urban district it passed through. Thus;

"...a motor omnibus running on a regular service, Birmingham - Stourbridge - Wolverhampton, has to have a license to ply for hire in Birmingham, Halesowen, Lye and Woolascote, Stourbridge, Amblecote, Kingswinford, Seisdon and Wolverhampton. If it is running on a circular route and returns to Birmingham via Dudley, it also requires licenses in Sedgely, Dudley, Tipton, Oldbury and Smethwick. (Ibid. p. 25)

77. There were several comments regarding responsibility for licensing. Sir Robert Fox, Town Clerk of Leeds "...took strong objection to County Councils being given any licensing powers...His suggestion was that the Licensing Authorities should be confined to the larger urban areas with a population limit for which there are precedents, such as the Education Act'.

Whereas the United Automobile Services Company suggested a Central Public Service Commission delegating powers to four Area Commissions; Scotland, Northern England, Central England and Southern England. It was John Cliff of the

Notes - Development of Industry

T.G.W.U. who later proposed the system of Traffic Commissioners. See Glaister & Mulley pp. 26-7.

78. As the Committee noted, the view of the Ministry was that;

"...The question is a very serious problem because in many cases there are big companies running passenger services to timetables and they run these vehicles throughout the day. A great many of the services which are in the public interest during certain hours of the day are not paying propositions, and the companies complain of unfair competition during the busy times from smaller vehicles by people who don't desire to serve the interests of the public at all. These people don't publish or run to any timetable - but they have the advantage of seeing the responsible Company's timetable and they run their vehicles five minutes ahead of the Company's service when to do so would be remunerative...On the one hand fair competition is doubtless to some extent in the interests of the public as tending to avoid monopolies but on the other hand undue competition may tend to cause the competing services to become un-remunerative with the result that they are all withdrawn."

79. Ibid p.29.

80. Ibid p.37.

81. In his "A History of British Trade Unions since 1889" - H.A. Clegg, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1985. Volume II p.482. Hugh Clegg's suggests;

"...Baldwin had appointed a Royal Commission on Transport.. Morrison's Road Traffic Act of 1930 closely followed its recommendations, which in turn largely derived from the evidence of the Transport and General Workers...The objects were to discourage competition at the expense of the service, and to maintain standards. Drivers and conductors also required licenses. Their hours of duty were limited by the Act, and a fair wages clause included to protect their pay."

This is questionable in the light of Glaister & Mulley's research.

82. "The Rolling Road" - L.A.G. Strong, Hutchinson, London 1956. p.140.

83. Hibbs reading of events concerning the 1924 strike and the importance of the Independents is part of a wider theory which promotes a mythical past for the bus industry centred on owner drivers and small operators who as we shall see were largely irrelevant to the development of the industry. (see Hibbs 1968 p. 91) The argument continues in the two Hobart Papers 'Transport for Passengers' Hobart No.23. 1962 Reprinted 1971 and 'Transport Without Politics' 1982. Neither of these are capable of understanding that the T.G.W.U.'s position was different to the Combines, to the Labour Government's, and to Herbert Morrison's. Indeed it must seem as be somewhat humorous for the main proponent of deregulation and privatisation to be using a criticism of the 1924 Act based on Herbert Morrison's views. No doubt he is unaware of the connotations!

Tony Corfield in his History of the Union comments on

Notes - Development of Industry

Morrison in 'The Record' in May 1960;

"...he appears from the beginning to have seen Ernest Bevin and Lord Ashfield, the Managing Director of the L.G.O.C., in an unholy alliance, to establish a monopoly of passenger transport in London. He vigorously opposed the London Traffic Act of 1924 (which was strongly backed both by the Union and the T.G.W.U.) on the grounds that it gave the London Traffic Combine what approximated to a statutory monopoly of London Omnibus Traffic." p. 45.

84. See 'The Record' May 1927 for a long and detailed report of John Cliff's evidence to the Royal Commission. Further discussion continues here throughout 1927-30. The union regarded these measures as interim steps towards complete public ownership which it regarded as the long-term solution. These suggestions were largely pragmatic.

85. The details of the settlement can be found in Barker and Robbins (A History of London Transport Volume II), Morrison (Socialisation and Transport), Clegg (Labour Relations in London Transport). Reproduced below is the explanation in the 'Busman's Punch' No. 4. February 1933...

"THE LONDON TRANSPORT BILL JAM FOR THE SHAREHOLDERS

It is not an easy job to unravel the finances of London General Omnibus Company. Naturally. Complete disclosure of the financial structure is not one of the characteristics of modern finance.

Shortly the facts of the Company are as follows: It was established in 1858. Its shares were purchased in 1912 by the holding Company, the Underground Electric Railways Company of London, Ltd. In 1931 its capital was:

Ordinary Shares	...	£2,750,000
Debenture capital	...	£5,561,256

Its capital assets include, of course, the fleet, the garages and the thousand-and-one items constituting a transport undertaking. In addition it owns practically a half-share in the £1,100,000 capital of A.E.C. and a substantial interest in the Tramways (M.E.T.) Omnibus Co. and in Overground Ltd., East Surrey Traction, and others. But amongst its so-called assets is an item in a different class- namely goodwill £928,999.

This item arises out of the L.G.O.C.'s wild scramble to buy up the pirates in 1923 and 1924 to maintain its monopoly. the item called 'goodwill' substantially represents what it paid away over and above the value it got for the buses it then purchased.

And what is it going to get out of the new Transport Board? The figures given in the draft Parliamentary Bill are as follows:

The L.G.O.C. gets:	
£2,240,429	4.5% A Stock
£3,250,000	5% B Stock
£5,087,500	C Stock

(These two items will satisfy the debenture stocks of the L.G.O.C.)

In other words for each ordinary share of £10 each, the shareholders in the L.G.O.C. get £18 10/- of 'C' Transport

Notes - Development of Industry

Stock.

The Act provides that C Stock carries interest for the first two years at 5% and 5.5% thereafter, with a limit of 6% if earned.

Furthermore, the L.G.O.C. will derive benefit from the concerns in which it has holdings. For instance, the Tramways (M.E.T.) Omnibus Co. get £182,635 4.5% A Stock, £101,545 5% B Stock and £348,014 C Stock. The consideration for the taking over of Overground Ltd. and similar concerns is included in the L.G.O.C. consideration.

So you will see that the subscribers who put up the £2,750,000 capital for the L.G.O.C. are not doing so badly. Their dividend has increased from 5% free of tax in 1920, to 8% free of tax in 1931 (i.e. in 1931 they received £200,000 plus the equivalent tax) and now and henceforward they are to receive a minimum of £254,375, less tax each year, with pretty nearly a certainty of £305,250 less tax, every year after the first two years. For don't forget our old friend Section 3 which says it is the duty of the Board to earn the specified rate of interest on its capital.

And behind it all is the controlling interest, the Underground Electric Railway Company of London, a concern with £10,700,990 capital, with a controlling interest in A.E.C., the L.G.O.C., in the Central London Railway, the City & South London Railway, London & Suburban Traction Co., London Electric Railway, and the Metropolitan District Railway.

These companies get their little pieces of Transport Stock as under:-

LONDON ELECTRIC RAILWAY :

£100 Ordinary Stock gets £92.5 'C' Stock.

METROPOLITAN DISTRICT RAILWAY :

£100 Ordinary Stock gets £92.5 'C' Stock.

CENTRAL LONDON RAILWAY :

£100 Ordinary Stock gets £92.5 'C' Stock.

£100 Preferred Ordinary Stock gets £85 'C' Stock.

£100 Deferred Ordinary Stock gets £100 'C' Stock.

CITY & SUBURBAN RAILWAY :

£100 Ordinary Stock gets £92.5 'C' Stock.

For example the London Electric Railway Company gets a total of £10,313,482 Stock carrying interest at 4.5%, £10,988,936 Stock carrying interest at 5%, and £8,628,345 'C' Stock carrying interest at anything up to 6%.

A nice little sum to be made each year.

And the L.C.C. a concern which borrowed the money and has repaid most of it out of its takings, gets a mere £8,000,000 'A' Stock (carrying interest at 4.5%) for its tramways. Rather a difference in the total sums payable to a concern which borrowed the money and a concern in which the shareholders consider they are entitled to hang around the operative's necks for ever.

One interesting sideline emerges from the financial provisions of the Act. Certain companies operating on the fringes of what is to be the London Transport Area have got to cease running certain services within the area. For that,

Notes - Development of Industry

of course, they are to be compensated. The provisions for calculating their compensation are interesting. For example, the value of the vehicles taken over "shall proceed upon a basis of first cost with a deduction in respect of depreciation calculated at 12.5% per annum on the first cost." So a bus which cost £2,000 seven years ago is still worth £250 - to the Transport Board. What would it be worth on the open market?

And goodwill. They only get five times the annual net profit per car mile. That's all, is it enough? What do you think?

And in the case of Eastern National, the allowance for goodwill is 2.5d. per car mile. Don't forget that figure when you turn in from a nice eight hour shift!

Did someone mention a percentage reduction? Oh yes; but then you were thinking of wages, not profits. The London Passenger Transport Bill deals fairly generously with the shareholders at any rate. And of course, if you can't please everybody it's best to please your friends, isn't it?"

From the 'Busmen's Punch' Number 4 - February 1933.

86. "Socialisation and Transport" - Herbert Morrison, Constable and Co. London 1933.p.27. Morrison's summary of these reports, including the House of Commons Select Committees on 'Motor Traffic in the Metropolis' (1913), 'Transport in the Metropolitan Area' (1919), the 'Advisory Committee on London Traffic' (1920), the Minister of Labour's Court of Inquiry into the London Passenger Workers Strike of 1924', and the 1926 and 1927 Reports of the London and Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee suggests further, that much of the policy was derived from other political parties notably the Liberal Industrial Policy and the Tories Electricity Act. The key debate was to be over the appointment of this select body.

87. Ibid. p.105.

88. Eldon-Barry op.cit. p.292. It took Bevin to point out that the criteria should at least be 'people with proven ability in transport'. In the end, the Conservative government altered the appointment system as follows. The Labour Bill proposed a Board of five experts. The Conservatives amended this to seven members appointed by five 'trustees' who were (1) The Chairman of London County Council (2) The President of the Law Society (3) A representative from the London & Home Counties Traffic Advisory Committee (4) The Chairman of the Committee of London Clearing Bankers (5) The President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Morrison himself, however much he disapproved of the changes, scornfully referring to two of them as a Bristol Accountant and a Bristol Solicitor (See Morrison p.161 and also Barker & Robbins History of London Transport II p.281) had nevertheless prepared the ground for this change by talking of experts in the first place. The obvious echo from the past here is Philip Snowden, see 'Socialism and Syndicalism' 1913 p.241.

89. Ibid. Speech quoted by Morrison on p. 194.

Notes - Development of Industry

90. Thus "...but this is a class society...and whether we say that interests will be represented or not, interests will be there. Every interest but that of the people doing the job." Conference Report 1932 p. 216.
91. "Problems of a Socialist Government" - Editor C. Addison, Victor Gollancz, London 1933. See VIII 'Workers' Control' by Harold Clay.
92. Morrison op.cit. p. 238.
93. Ibid. pp. 227-8.
94. Eldon-Barry op. cit. p. 315.
95. General histories include; Hibbs (1968), Klapper (1978), L.A.G. Strong (1956) all previously cited and "A History of Bus Services in the North East" - David Holding, David & Charles, Newton Abbott. 1979. "The Independent Bus" - Keith Turns, David & Charles, Newton Abbott 1974. "A History of British Bus Services : South Wales" - David Holding & T. Moyes, Ian Allen Ltd. Shepperton. 1986.
- Company histories include; "The First Five Decades of B.E.T." - Roger Fulford, London 1946. "B.E.T. The Sixth Decade" - Roger Fulford, London 1956. "Crosville - The Sowing and the Harvest" - W.J. Crosland-Taylor, Liverpool 1948. "State-Owned Without Tears" - W.J. Crosland-Taylor, Liverpool 1954. "A History of Midland Red" - Roy C. Anderson, David & Charles, Newton Abbott, 1984. "A History of Crosville Motor Services" - Roy C. Anderson, David & Charles, Newton Abbott. "A History of Western National" - Roy C. Anderson and G. Frankis, David & Charles, Newton Abbott. "A History of Royal Blue Express Services" - Roy C. Anderson and G. Frankis, David & Charles, Newton Abbott, 1970.
96. Hibbs (1968) p. 71.
97. Figures from "Inland Transport Statistics - G.B. 1900-1970" - D.L. Munby & Watson, Clarendon Press, London 1978. See Table B13.1
98. Hibbs (1968) pp. 62-8.
99. Fulford op. cit. p. 51.
100. Southdown Motor Services was itself a product of amalgamation. It was formed in 1917 from the London and Southern Counties Haulage Company, Sussex Motor Road Car Company, Worthing Motor Services and Brighton, Hove and Preston United Omnibus Company.
101. Quoted in 'The Record' - May 1928.
102. D. Holding (1979) p. 16.
103. "B.E.T.- The First Five Decades" - Roger Fulford London 1948 Table on p.76.
104. Table Six is derived largely from "The Bus and Coach Industry" - John Hibbs, J.M. Dent & Sons, London 1975. pp.45-51. Notes:
- a. The Ortona Company joined with the Eastern Counties Road Car Company of Ipswich and the Peterborough Electric Traction Company, together with the East Anglia Services of United Automobile Services owned to form the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company in 1931, which also owned the United's body-building works at Lowestoft. See Hibbs (1968) p.183.

Notes - Development of Industry

b. Wrexham & District Transport Company changed name to Western Transport Company in 1930 and subsequently was merged into Crosville in 1933. See Hibbs (1968) pp.182-3.

c. Great Western Railway services were merged with subsidiaries of the National Omnibus & Transport Company, mainly Western National when it was acquired by Tillings in 1931. Some services went to Crosville via Western Transport (see note b) and some to Bristol Tramways which G.W.R. bought in 1930. Other services were distributed as appropriate.

d. Autocar was acquired by East Surrey Traction in 1928 which B.E.T. subsequently tried and failed to purchase. East Surrey was itself merged into the L.G.O.C. as London Country Services just as some of the old National Omnibus & Transport Companies running from Watford were. See Barker & Robbins Volume II.

e. Brookes Brothers were acquired by the L.M.S. and merged with Crosville in 1930. See p.210-11 of this chapter.

f. National Omnibus & Transport Co. was purchased by Tillings in 1931 but not as part of Tillings & B.A.T. The Services were split into several companies mostly Southern, Western and Eastern National but also the L.G.O.C. See Hibbs (1968)(1975) and Barker & Robbins. Also "A History of Western National" by Roy C. Anderson and G.G.A. Frankis, David & Charles, Newton Abbot,

g. Redcar of Tonbridge Wells was acquired by Maidstone & District in 1935, a Tillings & B.A.T. Company. Barker & Robbins Volume II, Appendix 3.

h. Silver Queen was amalgamated to form the Lincolnshire Road Car Company Ltd. in 1930, a Tillings & B.A.T. Company. See Hibbs(1968) p.78.

105. "The Record" - See February 1925 for the Croyden case and March 1927 for details of the Bradford Corporation Bill. The Record commented on the Bradford case (in an interesting refutation of the idea of John Hibbs that the large employers and the union represented an 'unholy alliance') as follows; "The defeat of the Bill means that Bradford Corporation will not be able to develop its motor-bus service, and that a host of small proprietors will still run on conditions which are a menace to the tramway and bus workers in the municipal and well organised private undertakings... Motor omnibus development cannot be stopped but it can be regulated, and the insane competition on the road ended. We feel that this regulation can be bought about either through public ownership, which we favour, or large scale private ownership under some form of public control. The Bradford Corporation has recognised our agreements, and if it had secured power to develop its bus service, the men to be employed would have been working under trade union conditions in respect of hours, rates of pay etc. The bulk of the small omnibus employers recognise neither standard rates of pay or conditions of labour. They have a difficulty in maintaining an effective public service and running to a scheduled timetable. They have not the same opportunity for

Notes - Development of Industry

giving attention to overhaul and repair of vehicles as have the better equipped undertakings."

106. Bagwell (1974). Chapter Nine, part IV. There were several reasons why Railway investment in the provincial bus industry was unwise. Firstly because the bus industry had little relationship with 'railway business'. Secondly because it could have produced large improvements in efficiency if it had been expended on electrification as on the Southern Region. Thirdly because the four main railways between 1920 and 1938 suffered from an effective disinvestment of £125,000,000.

107. "A History of British Bus Services" - John Hibbs. David & Charles, Newton Abbot. see Chapter 4.

108. Fulford op.cit. p.73.

109. Ibid p.76.

110. Hibbs (1968) p. 123.

111. W.J. Crosland-Taylor (1948) pages 42-46. Also see "A History of Crosville Motor Services Ltd." op. cit. Chapter Two.

112. See "A History of Midland Red" op. cit. pp32-3.

113. Ibid. p.43.

114. "A History of Western National" op. cit. See Appendix B and Chapter 3.

115. Hibbs (1975) op. cit. p. 54.

116. Hibbs (1968) op. cit. p. 107.

117. Ibid. p. 124.

118. Hibbs (1975) op.cit. p.67.

119. Crosland-Taylor (1948) op.cit. p.17.

120. "A History of Crosville..." op. cit. pp. 161-2.

121. Hibbs (1975) op.cit. pp. 66-7. See also Fulford op.cit. for further details of the relationship between B.E.T. and subsidiary companies.

122. "My First Seventeen Years of Management" - Norman Dean in 'Readings in Omnibus History' Ed. Charles Lee. pp. 96-7.

123. Hibbs (1968) op.cit. see Chapter Four.

124. See Cheape's Thesis referred to in fn. 1 - & also A.J. Chandler - "The Visible Hand".

125. See Crosland-Taylor (1948) op. cit.

126. Norman Dean op.cit. p.102.

127. Crosland-Taylor op.cit. p.54.

128. Ibid. p.72.

129. Ibid. p. 73.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIFTY YEARS OF TRANSPORT TRADE UNIONISM

This chapter will examine the development of resistance within the labour process in the transport industry over half a century. Such a broad sweep will of necessity be lacking in detail but since there exists no general trade union history for road passenger transport, with the exception of London buses¹, this chapter will at least provide the outlines of such a history. The chapter is divided into three sections covering different aspects of this history.

The first section examines the origins of tram and bus trade unionism. The two main unions; the Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen (the A.A.T.) and the London and Provincial Union of Licensed Vehicle Workers' (the L.P.U.) were remarkably different in character. The tram union, the A.A.T. was bureaucratic, non-militant, committed to the careful construction of arbitration and conciliation machinery and laid stress on the provision of cash benefits to the membership. The L.P.U., by contrast, was democratic, militant, distrusted all negotiating machinery and was committed to the class struggle. The section concludes with a discussion of how far these differences can be ascribed to differences in the labour process described in the previous chapter.

After the first world war the two unions amalgamated into the United Vehicle Workers' Union (U.V.W.) as part of a longer process of amalgamation into the Transport & General Workers' Union (T.G.W.U.). The second section examines the stresses and strains caused by the collision of two quite different and hostile union traditions and the means by which these were contained by the T.G.W.U. Of especial interest here will be the arguments over Joint Industrial Councils and the 1924 London strike.

Transport Trade Unionism

The final section will examine the process of unionisation of the provincial bus industry and the development of oppositional groups within the union in London and the provincial sector. By contrast with the greater part of the union movement in the 1930's, the bus industry was unusually militant and the section concludes with an examination of the causes and consequences of this militancy which will return us to the question of the relationship between the labour process and labour resistance.

1 : Types of Unionism

1a : Tramway Trade Unionism

The Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen (A.A.T.) was a product of the new unionism of the late 1880's. The foundation of the union was the result of a wave of heightened class consciousness which embraced many hitherto unorganisable 'sweated' and unskilled trades from the match girls to the dockers and gas workers. However class consciousness alone could not sustain it and clearly it was municipalisation which assisted the consolidation of the union. This reliance on benevolent employers can be set in a wider context of a gradual shift from individualism to collectivism on the part of the Trade Union Congress (T.U.C.), which began increasingly to look towards legislation as a means of protection from the increasingly monopoly character of capitalism. The adoption of 'fair wages' policies by many municipal employers was vitally important to the A.A.T. The contrast between the treatment of the union by private and public employers was very marked. B.E.T. quickly acquired a reputation for poor conditions, the introduction of 'American methods' of scientific management leading to the intensification of work

Transport Trade Unionism

and union-busting. By contrast municipal authorities such as the London County Council acted as model employers. The A.A.T. leadership responded to this situation by sanctioning strikes against B.E.T. whilst urging reasonable and responsible behaviour towards municipal employers. Thus the A.A.T.'s future became inextricably linked with the process of municipal reform rather than militancy.

The conditions of tramwaymen in 1889 were miserable. Long hours, low pay, dictatorial supervision and frequent dismissals for petty infringements as described in the previous chapter led to agitation in Liverpool, Leicester, London, Glasgow and Cardiff fuelled no doubt by the successes of the dockers and gas workers.² However it was in Manchester that the most important strike took place. The Manchester and Salford (soon renamed the General) Amalgamated Association of Tramway and Vehicle Workers was to be one of the most successful of the new unions. The Association was based in Manchester, which in 1892 accounted for over half the membership⁴. New branches were established in Wolverhampton and Leicester in 1894, in Portsmouth in 1895, in Birmingham⁵, Cardiff, Crewe and Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1897. Two local unions in Belfast and Edinburgh were absorbed in 1898, and '...in almost every case these gains were held'.⁶

Table Ten on the next page shows the membership of the A.A.T. from 1889 to 1910. There are several points to note about these figures; firstly the relative stagnation in membership between 1901 and 1905 at a time of rapid growth in the industry, from 1902 to 1903 the mileage of tram lines increased by 23%. This would support the theory put forward here that there was no automatic connection between municipalisation and unionisation, the latter depending on control of the municipality falling to 'progressives' and 'reformers'. Secondly outside this period, the growth in membership, unlike the more general unions founded in 1889-90 was extremely regular reflecting the stability of

Transport Trade Unionism

employment that tramway work offered compared to much unskilled work.⁷ Thirdly the proportion of union members to total employment in the industry, usually referred to as union density, seems to have declined slightly in the latter decade, from 56% in 1901 to about 41% in 1911, although the latter figure may overstate the decline.⁸ This was probably the result of B.E.T. and the other private companies union busting operations, though the evidence is too thin to be certain.

----- TABLE TEN -----

MEMBERSHIP OF AMALGAMATED ASSOCIATION OF TRAMWAY &
VEHICLE WORKERS : 1889 - 1910⁹

YEAR	BRANCHES	MEMBERSHIP	YEAR	BRANCHES	MEMBERSHIP
1889	1	670	1899	43	7,431
1890	2	910	1900	51	9,214
1891	10	2,500	1901	60	10,442
1892	15	2,723	1902	67	10,741
1893	24	3,508	1903	72	10,889
1894	26	3,796	1904	79	10,757
1895	29	3,970	1905	73	11,059
1896	35	4,853	1906	92	13,011
1897	37	7,046	1907	89	15,010*
1898	40	6,946	1910	-	17,076*

* = indicates different sources for figures, see fn. 10.

In the period prior to 1900 the union undoubtedly grew on the basis of municipal reform rather than open class struggle. There are several indications of this. Firstly, a number of the principle officers of the union were councillors; in December 1893 George Jackson the General Secretary, R. Toothill the Vice President, W.M.Llewellyn the President, and a Mr. Holt also Vice President, in other words four of the five principle officers were councillors. Secondly, conditions were often improved following municipalisation as Clegg, Fox and Thompson¹⁰ report in the case of Sheffield (1896), Manchester (1897) and Hull (1899).

Thirdly, the case of Glasgow, demonstrates the precise

Transport Trade Unionism

way in which the politics of municipal reform presented an alternative to industrial militancy. The Trades Council, under the influence of the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) organised a meeting of tramway workers employed by the Glasgow Tramways and Omnibus Company to call a strike. The company responded by sacking those prominent in the meeting. The Trades Council organised a demonstration and agitated for a municipal takeover of the tramways to improve conditions, presenting this as the main issue in the municipal elections. Unionisation and improved conditions resulted from municipal reform rather than industrial action.¹¹

Finally we can contrast these examples of municipal reform with the A.A.T.'s experience elsewhere. In 1897, for example, a bitter strike at a private company in Birmingham, resulted from the introduction of scientific management. The cause of the dispute was the introduction of 'American methods' by a Mr. Sleath, a recent arrival from Canada. The A.A.T. report states the following;

"Under the former company the men were allowed seventy two minutes for a double journey. Mr. Sleath, with an American instinct for 'smartening' things, reduced the time to fifty-six minutes. Recently the time was further reduced from fifty-six minutes to fifty-four. An Inspector is kept at each terminal whose efforts are directed at getting the men away without the loss of a second."¹²

In 1901 there was a strike at a private tramway company at Ashton and Denton, owned by 'the syndicate', as B.E.T. was known. The 'Cotton Factory Times' reported the strike through an imaginary conversation;

"But to cut it short, the 'Skittish Electric Friction Company' as Flan calls it, had a manager on the Ashton section who - well he came from Birmingham [!]. Accordin' to reliable statements (furnished by himself) 'smashin' unions was only childs play to him,He advised the men to leave the union, an', as a gentle, delicate sort of incentive, he sacked about a dozen union men. Then with a smile of satisfaction he sat down to await the results of his masterly tactics."¹³

Although only involving 74 men the strike was of vital

Transport Trade Unionism

importance due to the B.E.T. connection. It lasted 39 days and ended with an Inquiry set up by the Board of Trade. The dismissal was on the pretext of falling traffic but the Company had made preparations including the setting up of a company friendly society and the importing of a number of men from the 'Free Labour association'. Due to vigorous support from Ashton, Hyde and Oldham Trades Councils, and large scale picketing of tram cars together with boycotts of businesses where the owners supported the company the strike was settled on the unions terms. George Jackson, the General Secretary negotiated a deal including full reinstatement, the dismissal of 'free labour', and union recognition.

Not all disputes ended in victory. At the same time as the Ashton dispute the Blackpool and Fleetwood Tramroads Company managed to end the branch of the A.A.T. in Blackpool through seasonal lay-offs. In July 1901, an attempt to unionise the Bristol Tramways and Carriage Company resulted in dismissals. The ensuing strike by 450 men failed to reinstate the men¹⁴. These attacks on trade unionism, especially by B.E.T. account for the stagnation in membership of the A.A.T. between 1900 and 1905. It was not that no new members were recruited, rather that there was a high turnover. In Birmingham breakaway company unions were encouraged and a thousand members lost. In Liverpool, the Conservative municipal employers were no better than the old private employers, the 860 members of March 1900 had all been 'encouraged' to leave by 1902.

These episodes confirm James Hinton's analysis of the establishment of the I.L.P. as; '...very largely a result of the activity of socialists in the new union explosion'. Political activity by the I.L.P. represented '...less a political generalization of industrial militancy, than a reaction to defeat in the industrial struggle, a search for political solutions where industrial ones had failed'.¹⁵ Many of the younger leaders of the A.A.T. joined the I.L.P. including John Cliff and Harold Clay, later to become

Transport Trade Unionism

national officials in the T.G.W.U.

The new interest in independent labour politics arose not from changes in the labour process leading to industrial militancy and consequently a heightened political consciousness among the membership but rather from a lack of confidence by the union leadership in the ability of the union to defend itself against an employer's offensive. More generally, as Richard Price has argued, the industrial defeats of the 1890's, with the exception of the miners, were simultaneously new growths in the system of formalised bargaining, disputes procedures and wages machinery¹⁶. Thus, paradoxically, union leaderships found their position inside the system of industrial relations strengthened at the same time as their industrial power was weakened. As competitive capitalism gave way to monopoly capitalism, as workers were increasingly subordinated to the power of capital inside the labour process in many industries, as industrial struggles increasingly went down to defeat, the trade union leaderships gradually discovered a vital new interest in politics.

George Jackson, the A.A.T.'s General Secretary, in the Annual Report of 1901, expresses this clearly;

"I believe we have neglected the question of labour representation too much; our enemies have seen it and profited by it. One hundred labour members in St. Stephens could compel any government to so amend the Trade Union Laws and Conspiracy Laws as would give us back our position of security from the attacks that some employers appear to desire to make upon our trade union funds. If the decision of the House of Lords is answered by trade unionists of the country returning to the House of Commons - whenever an opportunity presents itself - labour representatives, then such a decision will have done more to educate the trade-unionists to a sense of their position than all the strikes, lock-outs etc. that have taken place within the last twenty five years."¹⁷

The growth of municipal ownership and the transformation of the labour process through electrification had important

Transport Trade Unionism

consequences for the union in the decade after 1900. The attempts by the private sector to eliminate the union were successfully resisted whilst the 'progressive' municipal authorities attempted to improve wages and conditions as electrification brought increased profits. George Jackson warned against immediate expectations of improvement after municipalisation.

"There is an idea prevailing amongst a large number of workmen that immediately a corporation becomes an employer they must at once be called upon to materially reduce the hours of labour and increase the wages... a corporation should be a model employer...it is not to be expected, because they are local authorities, that any conditions should be imposed on them other than what is fair and reasonable."¹⁸

Hitched to the rising star of municipal tram operations, the union managed to overcome the private employers and entered a period of renewed growth. At the end of 1902 the A.A.T. amalgamated with the London Tramway Workers Union. As George Jackson stated;

"...the amalgamation gave us what we had long desired, that was an open door to organise London as members of our Association. The advantages of amalgamation will be mutual to both parties, it will materially strengthen the position of the London men and at the same time greatly assist our organisation in the provinces."¹⁹

By 1906 eighteen out of ninety two branches were in London and the handicap of the old Northern base of the union gradually overcome²⁰.

The A.A.T.'s growth, therefore, was not a direct result of changes in the labour process, resulting in a rising consciousness, expressed as unionisation. Rather it was the product of these changes in the objective conditions mediated through a complex relationship between trade unions and politics in a period of industrial defeat. The real effect of municipal tramway operation was from the A.A.T.'s point of view, the ability to gain recognition and take part in the construction of complex negotiating and arbitration procedures such as the Huddersfield Conciliation Board, and the machinery set up by the L.C.C. The hope of the union

Transport Trade Unionism

leadership was that improvements such as electrification would lead to increased profitability which would in turn produce improved wages and conditions for their members. For the union, the key aspect of this was institutionalisation of bargaining procedures, as represented by the growth of these Conciliation Boards. How did this union tradition contrast with the first bus unions?

1b : The First Years of the L.P.U.

In London the new labour force recruited to work the newly mechanised bus fleet quickly joined the London and Provincial Vehicle Workers' Union (L.P.U.).²¹ By the late Summer of 1913 nearly three quarters of London Bus workers had been recruited. Robert Williams, a leader of the National Transport Workers Federation described the motor-bus driver as;

"...the liveliest wire, both as a proletarian and a trade unionist, that I know. He is in many respects the most militant of all the sections of labour provided for in the Transport Worker's Federation. Compare him with the driver of an old lumbering horse-drawn vehicle. This individual could not be induced to join a trade union even if he were offered free membership....The difference between these two well-understood and typical cases is the difference of the machine."²²

But the explanation for militancy was more than just the machine. Partly it was a response to the harsh working conditions but also it must have been encouraged by the '...extraordinary series of victories won by the transport strikes of 1911..²³ Why did they choose the L.P.U. and not the A.A.T.? There are several reasons. The A.A.T. had not tried to recruit L.G.O.C. employees before 1911²⁴ and the patient strategy of the union relying on progressive municipal employers was clearly inappropriate, furthermore it was a union which tried to avoid strikes²⁵. Fuller ascribes this decision to a 'craftist' mentality which is an entirely inadequate explanation. The more plausible

Transport Trade Unionism

explanation is that the L.P.U. appeared far more militant and thus fitted the 'mood' of the busmen²⁶. The L.P.U., although stagnant for many years, had just come through a bitter dispute where cab employers had tried to pass a huge rise in the cost of petrol onto their employees.²⁷ In September 1913 a short dispute over the wearing of the union badge on a uniform that the employees had to pay for, led to recognition by the L.G.O.C. and Tillings.²⁸ The L.P.U., the 'Red Button' union had arrived.

The L.P.U. was a syndicalist union from the moment it was dominated by the busmen. Bob Holton summarises these ideas well;

"Syndicalist groups in Britain shared in common a belief in revolutionary industrial organisation and action as the central means of overthrowing capitalism. They stressed Direct Action rather than State-sponsored legislation as the main agency of social emancipation. In the industrial sphere, this meant a re-appraisal of trade union methods away from craft sectionalism and conciliatory bargaining policies, towards an all embracing industrial unionism, using the sympathetic strike and general strike as weapons of class conflict. ..Politically, syndicalism in Britain involved a rejection of gradualist social reform through Parliament based on electoral politics...This...meant.. opposition both to the contemporary pragmatism of the Parliamentary Labour Party, and also to the more resolute State Socialism of radicals in the Independent Labour Party."²⁹

This syndicalist mood conflicted sharply with the leadership of the L.P.U. For example, during the recognition strike the leadership of the L.P.U. tried to restrict the dispute to Tillings, however sympathy action by L.G.O.C. crews brought six hundred buses to a standstill, forcing the L.G.O.C. to concede recognition. Yet sympathy action was explicitly ruled out in the agreement. Fuller insists that the two unions were very different³⁰, but these differences were a consequence of history. The A.A.T. leadership had consolidated itself and the union over a period of years when most other 'new unions' were in decline, the L.P.U. leadership had to consolidate the new bus membership and the

Transport Trade Unionism

machinery of the union, in a period when trade union membership doubled in four years and militancy was rewarded with success.

The structures of the two organisations were quite different. The A.A.T. had an established apparatus and a considerable number of full time officials³¹ who were appointed by the E.C. The L.P.U. on the other hand had comparatively fewer officials who were elected every two years. Further, power in the L.P.U. was very much at garage level with a strong shop steward organisation which was lacking in the A.A.T.³² The structure of these two organisations was shaped by the balance of power between employers and the rank and file at the time of their formation and subsequent consolidation. In the 1890's the mere existence of general worker unions was under constant threat, B.E.T. and other private employers consistently tried to destroy them. From 1910 to 1914, the situation was reversed, an immense wave of unofficial strikes, especially in transport, pulled union officials in it's wake. Consequently the London based union was always far more open to rank and file control but this ideal was continually fought for inside the union.

Further, because the L.P.U. effectively dealt with one employer (although there were more than one they were all effectively linked together through agreements by 1913 when the last company outside the agreement; the National Steam Car Company, joined the 'pooling' system³³) a grievance could not be isolated to one section or branch of the union. Even if the A.A.T. had employed a system of election for officials, because the employers were so numerous and various, any one dispute would always only effect the minority of the membership. The difference between the two unions is partially explained by the cohesiveness of the London employers as against the divisions between and within the municipal and private tramway operations.

Transport Trade Unionism

Added to this was the experience of the membership. Successful strikes engendered a militant class or sectional consciousness, but the A.A.T., alone amongst transport unions, saw virtually no strikes during the whole period of the labour 'unrest', except at Leeds in 1911 and 1913.³⁴ By contrast the bus section of the L.P.U. saw frequent strikes often called unofficially at garage level. This led the L.P.U.'s President to complain;

"Since our last issue we had a slight disturbance in the bus world at Leyton, where the men threatened to stop of their own account. Many people admire the spirit, but the method is wrong. Members of a trade union must leave these matters to the E.C. of their society to deal with."³⁵ (Emphasis added)

This is not a world away from George Jackson, General Secretary of the A.A.T., complaining;

"It is to be regretted that members, at times when extreme caution is necessary, fail to take notice of the advice of their officials."³⁶ (Emphasis added)

The symmetry is complete since both men refer to their London membership. The difference between the two unions centres not on the bureaucratic tendencies of the leadership but on the cohesiveness of the employers and the consciousness of the rank and file and their ability, partly determined by the union structure, to control the leadership.

Union recognition, which bought the L.P.U. 2,700 members, did not remove grievances over the cost of uniforms, fines for breakdowns, liability for accidents, scheduling and route changes. From 1914 to 1918 there were continual unofficial strikes, organised at garage level, in defiance of the officials.³⁷ The gap between the aspirations of the rank and file and the officials was always marked in the L.P.U. In 1915 the officials negotiated the 'Busmen's Charter' which was the first comprehensive agreement. Although there were significant concessions such as free uniforms and payment for spreadovers, the main demands for a minimum wage, an end to the mileage system and a nine hour day were not met. Also the agreement conceded a ban on sympathy strikes.³⁸ The

Transport Trade Unionism

clause banning sympathy strikes resulted in a defeat at the hands of the National Steam Car Company at Nunhead, Peckham and Putney in January 1915. The men had demanded parity with the L.G.O.C. and were locked out³⁹.

The willingness of the L.P.U. leadership to agree to clauses preventing sympathy action and to offer arbitration demonstrated that they would, unless pressurised from below, act in the same way as the A.A.T. Yet the fact that all officials were elected and the union's own journal could criticise the leadership placed important obstacles in the way of bureaucratisation, whilst discontent among London tram workers in the A.A.T. offered important opportunities for the union to recruit provided that they were prepared to sanction militant action to outflank the apathetic leadership of the A.A.T. in London. In the Summer of 1911 the majority of Clapham Tramway Depot's workers had left the A.A.T. to join the L.P.U. on the basis that the A.A.T. full time officials, "...were certainly contaminated with the haughty airs and ancient graces of the aggregations to which they were associated, thereby rendering them impotent to act as representatives of a working class organisation..."⁴⁰ A few months later, the L.P.U. were claiming that the A.A.T. had only organised 4,500 out of 13,000 tramwaymen in London⁴¹.

Between 1913 and 1915 the L.P.U. made many attempts to recruit members on the tramways, as constant reports and appeals in the 'Record' show⁴². According to correspondence in 'The Record', the membership of both unions preferred amalgamation, along the classic syndicalist lines of 'One Big Union' as the solution⁴³. The 1915 tram strike settled the issue. The underlying cause of the tram strike was the intensification of work as a report in 'The Record' from Telford Avenue Tram Depot claimed;

"At the present time we are earning more money for the Council, doing twice as much work per man, with a big percentage of cars off the road...lets get a move on, and strike for that liberty at home our brothers are

Transport Trade Unionism

fighting for abroad..."⁴⁴

Furthermore real wages had been falling since the start of the war, purchasing power of all tramway workers fell by 20% in the first eighteen months. London was not immune from this process although money wages increased slightly faster than the national average.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, one estimate of L.C.C. revenue suggested that it had increased at an annual rate of £340,000 over the previous twelve months.⁴⁶

A strike began two weeks later over the question of the war bonus. This 1915 tram strike was a watershed in the development of both unions, the conduct of the A.A.T. practically broke this unions influence in London. It had a pronounced spontaneous, rank and file character;

"So you want to know how we New Cross boys started the strike? Well, it was this way. We at New Cross have had the screw put on us for a long while, and had appealed to the Executive Council to take definite action. They in their wisdom thought that the time was not yet ripe for such a remedy to our grievances. But seeing our earnestness they decided to call a series of meetings to have a chat with the tram-men in all parts of London. These meetings from the point of view of attendance were not a success, and our executive officers felt justified in not acting as we wished. We at New Cross felt on our side that now was the time, and decided to take our chance. Walking home from a Brixton midnight meeting we arranged that we should call out our comrades, and at 3 a.m. we started. In an hour over 100 men were with us, and by 7 o'clock the pavement was blocked by strikers, who were beginning to feel a new sense of freedom and manliness coming over them."⁴⁷

The mass picket at New Cross was repeated all across South London. Camberwell depot followed them out six hours later and "...the strike spread like wildfire, and before night fell every depot on the South side was affected".⁴⁸ The following day the L.P.U. made the strike official and called out the rest of the membership. In the face of joint L.P.U. and A.A.T. strike committees the L.P.U. suggested a joint council of the two unions but the A.A.T. declined.⁴⁹ On the same day the tram-men of the Metropolitan Electric Tramway Company joined the strike with the same demands for improved pay and conditions. Thus by the third day the Ministry of

Transport Trade Unionism

Labour Gazette records 5,854 men of the L.C.C. and 1,046 of the M.E.T. on strike.⁵⁰

The L.P.U. enthusiastically seized the opportunity to call meetings in support of the strike in Edgware, Enfield, Finchley and Highgate. Strike pay was sanctioned and A.A.T. members encouraged to join. The London District Organiser of the A.A.T., Mr. Watson, called no Executive Council meeting and then when E.C. members called one after seven days, failed to attend. After thirteen days and a second stormy meeting of the E.C. with Watson and the A.A.T. General Secretary George Jackson in attendance, strike pay and a joint negotiating committee finally materialised but by then the strike was effectively lost, as was most of the A.A.T.'s membership on M.E.T. and a large proportion of L.C.C. membership. Thirteen days of prevarication by the A.A.T. led the L.C.C. manager, Aubrey Llewellyn Fell to take a hard line and refuse to reinstate some 500 men eligible for military service.

The strike was solid and yet defeated. The defeat demonstrated the destructive role of the A.A.T. leadership. The defeat was essentially self-inflicted. George Jackson described it as '...the worst dispute the Association has ever had...' since it was in defiance of an agreement on wages which still had some months to run and consequently was a threat to the procedures and arbitration agreements that the union had so carefully constructed. The strike was caused '...mainly through the conduct of a rival union, whose whole object, in my opinion was to cripple us as a union in London'.⁵¹ Recriminations rumbled on inside the A.A.T.⁵² Many A.A.T. members joined the L.P.U. during the strike, the most notable being Archie Henderson, former President of the North East London branch of the A.A.T. Henderson's report of the strike inquiry by the A.A.T. in the 'Record' concludes;

"Has not this committee.....proved all that we critics of A.A.T. have ever said about them is true?
That they are misleading their members.

Transport Trade Unionism

That they are a sick club and not a trade union.
That they don't understand how to fight an employer.
That they are unable to prepare for a strike, yet
unable to conduct one, and don't know what to do after
one.
That they cannot defend their members before a dispute,
will not pay them when they are out on dispute, and do
not care what becomes of them after a dispute."⁵³

The crux of the matter for Henderson was the pursuit by the A.A.T. of arbitration and negotiating rights at the expense of fighting the employers, yet the leadership of the L.P.U. were treading the same pathway, as the defeats over the substantive issues of the 'Charter', the National Steam Car lock-out and the acceptance of the clause banning sympathy strikes demonstrated.

During the war there were essentially two processes at work; on the one hand the two union leaderships moved at different speeds towards the development of national and local bargaining procedures and arbitration, exploiting the increasingly tight control by the state over the labour force, and towards increasing collaboration and eventually amalgamation with other transport unions; and on the other hand there developed a tradition of militancy with often overt political overtones, which aimed to fight both the employers and their own union leaderships. Thus Henderson went on to become the organising secretary of the Vigilance Committee set up in the Autumn of 1916 in response to attempts by the L.P.U. leadership to increase the power of the Executive Committee over the membership. This rank and file movement requires some attention.

In the Autumn of 1916 the L.P.U. Executive Committee signed a deal which included compulsory arbitration. Expecting opposition the Executive proposed a series of rule changes which would have increased their power enormously. These included a rule changing the procedure for selecting officials, replacing election by the membership with appointment by the Executive Committee. Another rule proposed to abolish the members right to call general

Transport Trade Unionism

meetings. A final rule would have removed the automatic reference of all agreements to the membership for approval, instead new agreements would simply be sanctioned by the Executive. The A.A.T. Executive already possessed these powers. However a Special Delegate Meeting in November threw out all of these proposals by the margin of 16,400 to 300 votes.

The opposition had been organised by a Vigilance Committee, the first organised rank and file grouping in the L.P.U. Henderson, an ex-member of the A.A.T. explained the purpose of the Vigilance Committee in 'The Record';

"...not only is it necessary that we should change our method of administration, but also change the representatives who have failed to carry out the deliberations of the rank and file, but rather subjected and pandered to the employers, and even attempted to further enslave the worker."⁵⁴

In other words the committee's purpose was to make the leadership accountable to the rank and file, to change the leadership. The detailed machinations which followed are described elsewhere⁵⁵ and resulted in Saunders, a revolutionary internationalist and editor of the 'Record', and Henderson increasing their influence in the union. Also two E.C. members; Russell and Bywater were removed from the executive for defying the L.P.U.'s anti-war position by joining the Army.

The development of Vigilance Committees and other unofficial bodies was not simply confined to London busworkers, however the pattern of organisation of such bodies depended on the relation between the organisation of production and the development of the trade unions. Unlike the A.A.T., the L.P.U. branches were garage and depot based. This was partly due to the fact that mechanisation, which concentrated production in larger units, had preceded unionisation whereas the structure of the A.A.T. pre-dated electrification. The model of the Vigilance Committee closely resembled that of the Unofficial Reform Committee

Transport Trade Unionism

(U.R.C.) of the South Wales miners rather than the Shop Stewards movement in the engineering industry. Will Mainwaring, one of the authors of 'The Miner's Next Step' spoke on the platform of a mass meeting in Highgate during the 1915 Tram Strike⁵⁶, and the 'Record' carried an article on the Shop Stewards movement, so the ideas of both groups were certainly known to Vigilance Committee members.

The reason for the similarity between the Vigilance Committee and the U.R.C. is to be found in the structure of the unions. The L.P.U. was founded on garage branches, which meant in practice that garage issues were discussed and channelled through the branches, similarly the South Wales miners were organised through lodges based on each pit. Therefore, the tendency was for rank and file activity to centre on the union branch and focus on acting as a pressure group on the union officials, replacing them as necessary. Further, in both cases, one union effectively organised the whole workforce regardless of different occupations and skills within it. This was in direct contrast to engineering where union organisation and 'shop' organisation did not coincide.⁵⁷ In practice, on the buses, this meant a limitation on the ability of militants to act independently of the union machinery but allowed for greater rank and file influence within it.

What made the Vigilance Committee successful? The two most important factors are closely linked. The first concerns the distribution of power within the union. In the L.P.U. the shop steward system allowed the development of an accountable leadership closely related to day to day negotiations and aware of the grievances of the members. The second precondition is the willingness to take strike action at a local level without waiting for official sanction. This can only be successful where any stoppage quickly affects other workers. Since the work of a bus garage depends upon collective labour any stoppage rapidly affects other bus crews in the same garage, and since each garage was part of

Transport Trade Unionism

an integrated system of operation in which routes were often distributed between garages, then all stoppages tended to spread rapidly. Thus the stewards possessed an alternative mechanism to the leadership by which to involve large numbers of members in strike action.

These two factors are interdependent, unless there is a willingness by the members to stop work the shop stewards ability to negotiate at local level will be limited. Thus garage based militancy increases the power of the local unit of the union within the union's structure. This process never developed in the A.A.T. and thus there was no basis on which a rank and file organisation could develop. The consequence of this for the L.P.U. was that the Executive Council was unable to aggregate power to itself. Had the L.P.U. been formed ten years previously then the lack of militancy would have allowed the consolidation of a powerful Executive. All the other particular circumstances of the L.P.U. flowed from this. Since officials were elected they could afford to oppose the Executive. Since George Saunders was elected as the editor of the Union's Journal, he could open up the pages to discussion by the membership of all sorts of issues. The role of 'The Record' was to educate the membership, to encourage debate and to allow criticism of the Executive to be discussed by the whole membership. Thus the 1915 strike was of decisive importance because it was the first indication that tram workers could act independently of the A.A.T. leadership. The methods used to begin and spread the strike, namely mass picketing of tram depots, were identical to the tactics of the busmen. Thus it was not surprising that the A.A.T. repudiated the strike.⁵⁹

Transport Trade Unionism

2 : Amalgamation and Bureaucratisation

In this section the process of amalgamation whereby the A.A.T. and L.P.U. joined to form the U.V.W. (United Vehicle Workers' Union) and subsequently became part of the huge T.G.W.U. amalgamation will be analysed. A number of questions will be addressed. What obstacles were there to the consolidation of union organisation and collective bargaining institutions after 1918? How did these new unions and collective bargaining procedures curb the spontaneity and militancy of bus and tram workers? Did the 1924 strike represent the final phase of union consolidation? How was this process structured by the development of the industry and in particular the gradual decline of municipal tramways and the growth of the provincial industry?

2a : Federation or Amalgamation?

A critical experience which paved the way for the new union was the federation thrown up by the great labour unrest of 1910-14. The National Transport Workers' Federation (N.T.W.F.) was founded in March 1911.⁶⁰ Mostly consisting of port and maritime unions, the federation met success in Merseyside in 1911 and defeat in London in 1912. The lessons of this defeat laid the basis of the Triple Alliance; of the Miners, the Railwaymen and the N.T.W.F. in April 1914. Yet as Gosling, President of the Transport Federation put it;

"The Transport workers are not in the same perfect condition for action as are their mining and railway colleagues, and, what is more, they cannot hope to be so, until we have central control and complete amalgamation".⁶¹

The L.P.U. decided on affiliation in December 1915⁶², undoubtedly the main consideration in joining the Federation was the series of defeats at the National Steam Car Company, the London County Council tramways, and subsequently at the

Transport Trade Unionism

hands of the South Metropolitan Tramway Company and Croydon Corporation. Yet despite Federation, it was local action by affiliates that was responsible for real improvements, rather than the Federation itself. Typical was the strike over War Bonus in April 1917 which began at Palmers Green garage and engulfed most of the fleet.⁶³ The same sort of unofficial action was occurring in all parts of the Federation, with the stronger sections such as the London busmen and the Merseyside Dockers, winning improvements in wages through strike action, while the weaker sections saw their real wages decline. The N.T.W.F. leaders, especially Bevin and Gosling, attempted to reverse this situation, by calling sectional conferences of the Federation, as Bevin had done successfully in South Wales, in order to use the sectional strength of particular unions and areas to promote national bargaining. In August 1917 the Federation organised a conference of road transport unions at Salford. Seventeen unions⁶⁴ attended the conference of whom only nine were affiliates at the start. The most significant aspect of the Salford conference was the attendance of both the L.P.U. and the A.A.T., the tramway union deciding on affiliation at the conference.

National negotiations for carters by Bevin, Gosling and Williams resulted in an agreement on twenty shillings war bonus in January, which notably was below the advance obtained locally in Manchester and Scotland. On the tramways progress in putting forward the national claim was slower, a claim of twenty shillings war bonus being submitted for all tramway workers and the busworkers of the L.G.O.C. A joint conference was held under the auspices of the Board of Trade at the end of January 1918 at which the two employers organisations; the Municipal Tramways Association and the Tramways and Light Railways Association, refused to negotiate with N.T.W.F. as 'unrepresentative'. The Federation refused to call a strike, preferring to leave the matter to individual unions. A meeting of the L.P.U. and A.A.T. executives at Leicester in February to discuss

Transport Trade Unionism

amalgamation resolved for a stoppage on March 9th. unless there was a national conference before this date. The claim was conceded in full on the day before the strike was set to begin. Thus ended the first successful joint negotiations by the two unions, the ghost of 1915 was laid to rest.

The next issue which was to result in a spontaneous strike was the question of the conditions of employment of women workers. The first women workers appeared on the trams in Glasgow in March 1915, and London one year later. Both unions insisted that women workers be paid the same as men and that their employment be terminated at the end of the War⁶⁵. The strike was precipitated by a series of War Bonus awards to men only. After the 1917 strike which began at Palmers Green, a wage award of five shillings was paid to men only. A further award of five shillings in the Spring of 1918 was also only paid to men. The N.T.W.F. called a conference of tramway unions, demanding parity and calling for fresh negotiations over which the municipal employers refused but the private undertakings accepted. By the middle of August 1918 the A.A.T. was preparing a delegate conference to call a strike. On the 17th. August women on the London buses and trams walked out, The L.P.U. officials were insisting on negotiations with the Committee on Production, and demanded a return to work which the women refused. The L.P.U. then made the strike official, calling out the whole membership and an estimated 11,000 stopped work, including London, the South Coast and Bristol.⁶⁶ The five shillings award was conceded but the principle of equal pay was not.

The spontaneous strike of women workers, supported by the L.P.U. demonstrates the contradictory nature of the Federation. The leadership of the Federation was trying to promote systematic national bargaining in various industries. The rank and file were generally antagonistic, especially where there had been successful strike action⁶⁷. A tradition of militancy, once established as in London,

Transport Trade Unionism

would not sacrifice immediate interests for the extension of national bargaining, neither would the strongest sections of the A.A.T. As one delegate at their 1918 conference confirmed;

"Can you command at any time you like the absolute discipline of all your members in different branches? I say you cannot. It is all very well while you have the Committee on Production to rush things through, but when the war is over, what will happen?...you must realise that it is not possible to declare for a policy to work upon national lines and at the same time to work upon local lines. You have to declare for one or the other."⁶⁸

The amalgamation of the unions and the setting up of national negotiating machinery represented a challenge for the rank and file organisation in London. Either it could attempt to create a national rank and file organisation, on the basis of the unofficial strikes such as the women's strike or it could retreat into isolation and sectionalism, attempting to resist the amalgamation.

2b : The Amalgamation of the L.P.U. and A.A.T.

The A.A.T. and the L.P.U. held a series of discussions about amalgamation; Manchester in September 1913, Leicester and Manchester in May 1917, Leicester in 1918.⁶⁹ The negotiations centred on two problems; firstly the protection of contributory benefits and secondly the structure of the new union.⁷⁰ Why did the L.P.U. seek amalgamation with a union which one of their officials had described as '...a sick club and not a trade union..' and '..unable to conduct a strike..'? The root cause of the change of heart was the experience of the N.T.W.F. which had entered into national bargaining for both the bus and tram industry. While the L.P.U. represented most bus workers in 1917 the vast majority being in London, clearly the bus industry would expand outside London after the war. Secondly the setting up of a National Joint Industrial Council (N.J.I.C.) for the tram industry would enforce co-operation with the A.A.T., since they would have the majority of tram workers.⁷¹

Transport Trade Unionism

Finally the failure of the Vigilance Committee to gain control of the E.C. of the L.P.U. meant that sections of the leadership saw amalgamation as a means to weaken rank and file influence.⁷²

A Special Delegate Conference of the L.P.U. called in 1917, saw an attempt to restructure the union to represent sectional interests.⁷³ However the Vigilance Committee saw this as simply a manoeuvre by which the Executive Committee could free itself from rank and file accountability. The Executive proposed another rule change at this Special Delegate Meeting which tried to remove the right of the membership to elect organisers (officials), arguing that there was an 'absence of effective control' over them by the Executive. The real reason was that most of the organisers; George Sanders and J. Martin, who referred to themselves as 'Revolutionary International Socialists', F.J. Witcher, A. Henderson and J. Chesholm; supported the Vigilance Committee against the Executive. Of the remaining officials only Ben Smith (The Organising Secretary) and J. Palmer opposed the Vigilance Committee. Chesholm's argument was typical;

"I maintain, so far as the interests of the society are concerned, that 20,000 members are better able to judge than twelve members of the Executive Council, however great their intelligence may be."⁷⁴

The rule change was defeated by 17,400 to 300 votes.

The importance of the principle of rank and file control over the officials can be seen in terms of the L.C.C.'s Conciliation Board. As one delegate put it;

"As members of the working classes, you will quite understand that we have nothing to conciliate; and that the Conciliation Board is a double-edged weapon...the working classes are in these respects disadvantaged."⁷⁵

The problem with the L.C.C. Board was that '...the rank and file have no voice over whom they shall send there...all these positions should be filled by representatives of the rank and file...'⁷⁶ The L.P.U. at this conference made clear a number of principles; that officials should be elected, that sectional interests should not be represented inside

Transport Trade Unionism

the union structure in such a way as to be open to manipulation by the Executive as a means to avoid rank and file control, and that Conciliation Boards should be distrusted and could only work with rank and file control.

However by the end of the following year the L.P.U. was attempting to pressurise the A.A.T. into amalgamation by setting up new branches in the North.⁷⁷ The real sticking point in the amalgamation talks, was the procedure for selecting officials; in the A.A.T. they were appointed by the Executive Committee and in the L.P.U. elected every two years. The L.P.U. prepared to compromise by holding elections every three years, but Stanley Hirst, General Secretary of the tramway union was of the opinion that election would produce pliable officials more concerned with popularity than with effective trade unionism; '...the man who is elected for a short notice has to make as many friends as he can to retain his position position, the man who runs straight makes enemies.'⁷⁸ Whilst Henderson made the memorable reply; '...I can afford to ignore the bureaucrats of Gerrard Street {the L.P.U. office} and do what I am told by the democrats of the East End of London.'⁷⁹ The L.P.U. were convinced that their own membership would not stand for appointment, as Ben Smith put it; '...our members when they see in the Rules that the officials shall be permanent, there will be no amalgamation'⁸⁰. Yet the amalgamation went ahead with the principle of election of officials conceded. How did this come about?

Towards the end of 1918, as the negotiations for a N.J.I.C. in the tramway industry were bearing fruit, the Executive Committee of the L.P.U. attempted to set up a Whitley Council for the London Buses. The fight over this issue inside the union, weakened the opposition at a crucial time. In December 1918 a Special Delegate Conference voted 46 to 6 against participation in the scheme. The E.C. responded by calling a second Special Delegate Meeting on

Transport Trade Unionism

January 30th. 1919, where a card vote reversed the previous decision by 22,000 votes to 2,100. According to a new unofficial grouping inside the union, the Rank and File Committee, many of the delegates were not under instruction from their branches. The Committee took the Union to Court over the issue, which placed sympathetic officials such as Sanders in a difficult position. Both Fuller and Barrett agree that the Rank and File Committee was always weaker than the Vigilance Committee because it had no support outside the bus section⁸¹. This was probably not the real reason the Committee failed, far more likely is that the tactic of taking the Union to the Courts backfired, as a report in 'The Record' suggests⁸². The second key issue that the Rank and File Committee put forward was the question of election of officials. It was defeated on this issue, but the Whitley scheme foundered. The new amalgamation proceeded on the defeat of the unofficial union opposition. How far the Whitley scheme was a camouflage for the real purposes of the E.C. is impossible to say. The A.A.T. and L.P.U. became the United Vehicle Workers, the two principle road passenger transport unions had merged, yet it would take more than restructuring to resolve the deep contradictions and antagonisms between the two unions.

2c : The United Vehicle Workers' Union

The amalgamation of the L.P.U. and A.A.T. was inevitably going to lead to conflict inside the new union. One union was dominated by bureaucratic centralism, a powerful executive committee which appointed the full time officials and aimed at incorporation into an ordered bargaining structure of conciliation and arbitration committees, National Joint Industrial Councils (N.J.I.C.) and so on. The other union had a powerful rank and file tradition, a very militant strike record on the buses and to a lesser extent on the trams, a tradition of electing organisers and a union journal that was a very real discussion document for the

Transport Trade Unionism

union activists. Numerically, the L.P.U. was a minority within the new union, however the London bus section would dominate the bus section of the new union, whereas on the trams, the old L.P.U. membership would be not much larger than the membership of Manchester, the birth place of the A.A.T. This was reflected in the appointments of the new union; Sanders became National Organiser of the Omnibus Section, while John Cliff, from Leeds became National Secretary of the employees side of the N.J.I.C., Stanley Hirst became the new General Secretary and Alf Smith, of the L.P.U. became National Organiser of the Commercial Section, representing lorry drivers. The L.P.U.'s 'Record' remained as a weapon in the hands of the militants. However this distribution of positions understates the powerful forces pushing towards bureaucratic centralism, for behind Hirst and Cliff stood Ernest Bevin from the N.T.W.F. who was already working for a still larger amalgamation for all transport workers.

The struggle between the two types of union would be principally influenced by two factors; on the one side promoting the spread of rank and file, militant trade unionism would be the number and type of strikes; on the other, encouraging centralism would be the progress of national negotiating procedures and the extent to which they centralised power in the hands of the officials. 1919 was a year of unparalleled militancy in most of industry, however, it was uneven precisely because the strongest sections of the transport workers received major concessions in order to avert the threat of joint action by the Triple Alliance. Only when this threat had receded did the employers begin to try to reduce the concessions that had been offered. This promoted a whole series of sectional strikes because the N.J.I.C. tried to enforce national wage agreements which were below the best that could be achieved in the strongest areas, but above that of the weakest areas.

In early 1919, under pressure from rising losses, the

Transport Trade Unionism

Tramway employers offered terms which would have meant a wage cut for half of all tramway workers⁸³. The U.V.W. threatened strike action and the Ministry of Labour intervened, and agreed to support an increase in fares in return for a 48 hour week for all those on 57 hours or less, with no loss of pay. Nearly 5,500 came out on unofficial strike, attempting to achieve further concessions, the first major municipal tramway strikes outside London.⁸⁴ There was also an agreement 'in principle' to shorten spreadovers, standardise overtime rates and introduce paid holidays. The result of these negotiations was a National Agreement and a commitment to join the N.J.I.C. which first met in September 1919. London tram workers achieved a better deal and the N.J.I.C. faced this problem by institutionalising pay differentials. As Rodger Charles explains;

"It took four years of conflict and effort to revise the wage system in the industry. Four areas, with different gradings of rates, had been agreed in 1920. In 1924, these were overhauled and codified with a maximum and minimum in each grade...District Councils were empowered to grant independent rises."⁸⁵

The same process occurred early in 1920 with the N.J.I.C. reaching agreement at rates below those agreed locally in the North West.⁸⁶ On April 3rd. and 4th. a wave of unofficial strikes began in Manchester, Oldham, Cardiff, Swansea and Llanelli⁸⁷, followed by the threat of further stoppages in Birmingham, Newport, Hull and Nottingham. The strikes involved an estimated 7,000 men which were settled by local agreements at between 2/- and 4/- above N.J.I.C. rates, representing the highest level of wages ever, though still worth 10% less than 1914.⁸⁸ 1919 and 1920 saw the highest number of strikes in the industry, not just over wages but over issues such as smoking in uniform, the right of Inspectors to join unions and standing passengers⁸⁹. Clearly the old complacency of the A.A.T. was under threat from this unprecedented militancy.

In London, the proposed Whitley Council scheme for the

Transport Trade Unionism

buses was defeated and with it any possibility of an N.J.I.C. for the bus industry since fully half of all bus employees were in the capital. The 1919 agreement was not bettered for 25 years and provided an example to provincial bus workers.⁹⁰ The following year, in the run up to the first conference of the U.V.W., the L.G.O.C. announced that it had 500 men surplus to requirements who would be dismissed, and a further 534 drivers and 405 conductors surplus due to vehicle shortages.⁹¹ A series of Special Executive Meetings produced a compromise agreement which avoided redundancies in return for some elements of the 1919 improvements.⁹²

The combination of greatly increased militancy and an offensive by the employers placed a great deal of stress on the new amalgamation. In the first Annual Report Stanley Hirst complained;

"We have had a fairly large number of strikes during the year, and while some have been justifiable, I am bound to say that others were not.

The E.C. have viewed these strikes very sympathetically, perhaps in the case of unofficial strikes, too sympathetically for the good government of the Union...if the heart instead of the head is to be the dominant factor in deciding how funds of the union shall be spent...we may find ourselves in difficulty..."⁹³

The major disputes inside the union concerned the power of the Executive over different trade sections, the accountability of full time officials, participation in N.J.I.C.'s and conciliation boards, and the constant tension between the most militant sections and the union executive and the right of the rank and file to lobby their own union⁹⁴. These differences surfaced at the first conference which took place against a background of four strikes⁹⁵, indicating the unusually militant atmosphere of the time, and the determination by different branches within the union to get wage rates above the N.J.I.C. agreement or to enforce the national wage claim of the bus section which was causing great difficulties⁹⁶.

Transport Trade Unionism

John Cliff, Secretary of the union side of the N.J.I.C., presented a Report to the Conference. The Report sums up the differences between two quite different forms of unionism; one which aims to encourage the members to organise and strike for better conditions and one which trades off the potential strength of the best organised in order to attempt to spread those gains across the whole membership. The former regards militancy in the strongest sections as a means to encourage the poorly organised, whereas the latter regards strikes as an impediment to the due processes of negotiation. The Report and Sanders reply will be quoted at length, as an illustration of the general argument.

Cliff begins his report by underlining the importance of national negotiations;

"Many of the decisions could not have been secured by local economic pressure, whilst many other decisions would have meant long and protracted negotiations with the various undertakings, and possibly withdrawals of labour, before success could have been achieved."⁹⁷

National negotiations were a means of raising the conditions of the weaker sections in return for industrial peace. Cliff then attacked the London busmen;

"...They are not content to be left alone and not to have an Industrial Council, but they must come and interfere with the expressed wish of the tramway membership to have an Industrial Council."⁹⁸

Cliff then attacked sectionalism in the union, whether of the London busmen or the unofficial strikers on the Manchester trams;

"Now this is an Executive Council that stands for the whole of the members, and they have no right to be engaged for days upon prosecuting a purely London busmen's application. But let us take the cost; £2,000...I would be safe in saying that the two [employers]..associations taken together spent £2,300 rebutting our application in October last...in order to get district arbitrations. Now there are certain people who say that the Manchester men and those who went on strike, did the right thing. The employers spent £2,300 last October in order to get district arbitrations and district settlements and the Manchester men made them a present of it for naught."⁹⁹

Transport Trade Unionism

Sectionalism, argued Cliff, left the weaker sections, such as the provincial busmen, behind, because there was no N.J.I.C.;

"Will the rank and file committee tell me...why the application that was ordered to be put in by the Executive has not been prosecuted on behalf of the provincial 'bus companies? If the people who work on the buses outside London are so well organised, and if the rank and file mean that the state of the organisation in the bus section is so good, why are not the interests of the provincial 'bus members looked after?" 100

John Cliff firmly believed that an N.J.I.C. could achieve far more than wage militancy. His main critique of the Rank and File Committee and the 'Manchester men' is that guerilla strike action wrecks the carefully laid plans of the union in its approach to the N.J.I.C. Without a Joint Council the weaker sections of the union get left behind. Rank and File Committees, and unofficial strikes are an anathema to systematic trade union bargaining the purpose of which is to use the potential power of the membership, particularly the strongest sections, to improve conditions for the whole membership. Underpinning his attitude towards N.J.I.C.'s was a belief that they were a crucial step towards undermining the power of the employers by wresting control from them.

George Sanders, in his reply, defended unofficial strikes and attacked the N.J.I.C. negotiations;

"I have always been bitterly opposed to Joint Industrial Councils ...would you have got eight and one [He is referring to the wage settlement in shillings] if the J.I.C. had been left alone to decide it? You got it through Manchester, Huddersfield and the other places striking. (Applause) The J.I.C. agreed to recommend five and one, you got eight and one instead. How did you get it? By direct action and force, and yet Mr. Cliff turns round on those who led the way for you to get thousands of pounds out of the employer's pockets and condemns them for their action." 101

On the question of progress of the Provincial Bus Section, Sanders replied to Cliff as follows;

Transport Trade Unionism

"I did object strongly to one thing Mr. Cliff said. He tried to set the provincial delegates against the department by saying we had not done all we might have done. (A Voice: 'Well have you?') The Ipswich delegate says 'Have you?' I know he is sore on that point. Ipswich have not been members for twelve months yet. Many men who have been members a lot longer and drive a tram do not get so much money. The Ipswich men have just got nine shillings on top of a very bad basic rate...Your position depends - it does not matter whether you are a tram or 'busman or commercial - on you yourselves and not on your officials at all. Just as much as you are prepared to be strong and take up a strong position will you secure your own welfare." ¹⁰²

Sanders contrasted direct action with J.I.C.'s. They were, he said, but a crumb, a '...palliative thrown from the table of the master classes'¹⁰³ They provided no substitute for strong organisation, instead their main object;

"...is to do away with strikes, and nobody can deny it. They trot out the old platitude that it does not debar you from striking, but you men are condemned if you strike when you have a J.I.C.... You are not going to get much out of a conference cheek by jowl with the employers whose only interest can be to get as much as possible out of you for as little as possible." ¹⁰⁴

Sanders opposed an N.J.I.C. for the bus industry on the grounds that it would impede the growth of the union in the provinces, for;

"...we have not got provincial 'busmen in England who have been in the union anywhere near the time the London 'busmen have. The provincial 'busmen will have no cause for complaint when we can rely on their solidarity the same as upon the London 'busmen. I would rather see a body of members a little bit wild at times and stepping over the traces. You are dealing with workers, and you must take account of their environment. What chance have they had? Having the lesson of solidarity thrust upon them, some will rush forward a bit wildly. Surely that is not a crime?" ¹⁰⁵

This debate between Cliff and Sanders illuminates the whole inter-war history of the attempts to organise provincial bus workers. The question of N.J.I.C.'s was already decided for both trams and London buses but which would be most appropriate for the provincial bus section? The debate also illuminates two quite different concepts of

Transport Trade Unionism

trade unionism. The difference between Cliff, a believer in gradually negotiating capitalism out of existence and in centralising power into the hands of a professional union administration and Sanders, a revolutionary international socialist who believed in rank and file democracy leading to a growth in militancy to defeat the employers as a class, could not be more marked. Yet these differences cannot simply be explained away as the product of an atmosphere of bargaining in the public and private sectors, for Cliff was a firm believer in the necessity of trade unionism no matter who the employer;

"Even if we get a Labour Council on any one of these undertakings we have still got to have a trade union - we have still got to have trade union action."¹⁰⁶

The explanation for the striking differences between these two officials, lies in the precise impact of new technology on a complex pattern of class consciousness and militancy. The legacy of the past weighed heavily on each one. The A.A.T. was consolidated in a period of industrial defeats, in which progress depended on political bargaining with mostly Liberal employers in the sector of the industry under public ownership. Electrification had meant increased profits, more job security and a distribution of some of the profits to the employees. However now Cliff faced the difficult task of consolidating the N.J.I.C. in a period when the tramway industry was no longer as profitable. Strike action was nowhere as near as attractive as the interventions of the Ministry of Labour which had supported fare increases in both 1919 and 1920 to pay for increased wages. Ultimately, tramway wages and conditions would depend on the ability of the union to persuade a Labour Government to reconstruct the industry with state finance. Sectional wage militancy, as Phillips pointed out, acted as a centrifugal force on the employers.¹⁰⁷ The absence of such militancy, which was the pre-condition for consolidating the N.J.I.C., acted as an equally centrifugal force, consolidating power in the highest reaches of the trade

Transport Trade Unionism

union bureaucracy.

The experience of Sanders had been totally different. The L.P.U. had been founded on syndicalist militancy which coincided with the monopolisation of London buses into the Combine. The conditions of 1919 had been won on the basis of continuous wartime militancy which prevented the consolidation of power in the bureaucracy, and outwitted every attempt to create a system of compulsory arbitration or any other means which took power away from the garage and handed it to a tame layer of officialdom. The problem Sanders faced was that he was now part of an official structure in which he, and his views, were in the minority. Unless the new-found militancy on the tramways continued and began to undermine the position of Cliff and Hirst, or unless the militancy spread to the provincial sector, Sanders position would become increasingly untenable. Previously, the various rank and file groups, had relied on support from the L.P.U.'s organisers and 'The Record'. It was by no means clear that they could continue to be as effective if this support inside the bureaucracy was removed.

The 1920 Conference overwhelmingly endorsed John Cliff's position, nevertheless N.J.I.C.'s did not succeed in Road Haulage and in the Bus Section the hostility of the London membership prevented any moves by the Executive to overrule Sanders opposition. The onset of recession effectively meant that the steam ran out of the wave of tramway militancy, although the busmen were less affected by it. The N.J.I.C., far from bringing universal wage improvements became a vehicle for negotiating wage cuts and the new union was consolidated in a period of defeat almost as if the early history of the A.A.T. was repeating itself. The provincial busmen, far from having 'the lesson of solidarity thrust upon them' learned instead a complex combination of victory and defeat.

Transport Trade Unionism

2d : One Big Union

During 1921 the supporters of the amalgamation issued a poster appealing to;

"All Vehicle Workers, Motor and Horse Drivers, Mates, Washers, Horse Keepers, Stablemen, Garage Workers, Tramway, Bus, Cab & other Passenger Workers, Furniture Removal and Warehousing Workers, Dairy Workers, Van Travellers, Co-operative Employees, Municipal Workers, Coal workers, Tumble Cart Workers & all other grades of Vehicle Workers. Transport and General Workers...show your determination for ONE BIG UNION"¹⁰⁸

Road transport workers and dockers formed the heart of the new amalgamation and the tram and bus section would form the largest single group in the Union. The T.G.W.U. Road Passenger Transport Section faced the still unresolved contradictions within the U.V.W.

Before the amalgamation took place, Bevin played a key role in negotiations in the tramway industry. In October 1920 the U.V.W.'s wage claim was rejected outright by the private employers whilst the municipal employers offered an inquiry which was set up in December. The U.V.W. chose Bevin and Gosling hoping that Bevin would display the same success as in the famous Shaw Inquiry from whence Bevin derived his nickname as the 'Docker's K.C.'.¹⁰⁹ However the outcome was very different. The union were forced to accept a sliding scale of wages which were to be cut in line with the cost of living.¹¹⁰ The London bus section, by contrast, was able to defend their own position successfully rejecting a sliding scale of wages. In November 1920 an offer to trade a proposed 3 shillings wage cut in return for twelve hour spreadovers was fought off. In the light of these attacks amalgamation seemed the most effective way forward. Of the L.P.U. leadership; Ben Smith emphasized the increased power of a larger centralised organisation '...that will give us the power of attack..' Henderson thought that '... our first step to power and strength is amalgamation.' Only Sanders was less enthusiastic.¹¹¹ A majority vote for amalgamation

Transport Trade Unionism

by the U.V.W. was achieved in April 1921.

In the same month, on 'Black Friday', the promised support of the N.T.W.F. to the Miners' Federation to resist wage cuts collapsed. In the words of Allan Hutt; '...all that remained were a series of sectional rearguard actions; stubbornly fought and doomed to defeat.'¹¹² In June 1921 a national ballot of tramway workers accepted wage cuts of three shillings a week, a further two shillings in November and a shortening of the guaranteed week for new recruits. Three bitter defensive strikes followed¹¹³. Real wages fell consistently over the next eighteen months.¹¹⁴ The advice from 'The Record', now under the firm control of the T.G.W.U. leadership was clear; '...militant workers must not dissipate their energies needlessly. Unemployment is prevalent, strikes are difficult...'¹¹⁵

The argument for a centralised union rather than a federation pulling in different directions became irresistible. The consequence for the different transport unions was that dockers, tramwaymen and carters all accepted wage cuts without a fight. However, among the bus workers, both in London and outside, the industry was expanding rapidly. This engendered both militancy and in London, the threat of secession. The first signs of this new mood was their role in the South East District Vigilance Committee. A protest meeting of 10,000 dispatched a delegation to the U.V.W. head office at Emperor's Gate which locked out the officials and used the facilities to print a leaflet attacking them. The Secretary of the Vigilance Committee was sacked, strikes were threatened and three branches refused to hand over union dues until the E.C. explained their actions.¹¹⁶ A second sign of dissatisfaction was the development of the Red International of Labour Unions (R.I.L.U.) in Britain. Sanders played a prominent role in organising their first conference at which there were 15 delegates from the U.V.W.¹¹⁷ There were also signs of Communist Party activity which were reported in 'The

Transport Trade Unionism

Record'.¹¹⁸

Bevin responded by closing the paper down and replacing it with the 'T. & G.W.U. Record' which was far more bland and uncontroversial¹¹⁹. Letters were rare and critical reports unknown. Unlike the previous paper which allowed discussion and argument, promoted political controversy, carried branch reports and critical letters, the new paper was firmly for transmitting information to the membership. Whereas the old paper could criticise the actions of officials and call for explanations, in other words act as a tool for the rank and file, the new paper was firmly controlled from above. This is especially clear on the question of wages.

The closing down of 'The Record' did not end the discontent that was accumulating. In the latter part of 1921 several branches called for a sectional conference and there was talk of a TOT (Trams, Omnibus and Tubes) Union. The U.V.W. did nothing, and when the number of branches calling for the conference passed twenty, the provisional executive of the T. & G.W.U. stepped in¹²⁰. One branch, Croydon No. 2, actually left the Union¹²¹. One grievance was enforced overtime working despite agreements to the contrary¹²². More generally there was a distrust of officials because of their high salaries and expenses and more importantly because of the lack of rank and file control over them.¹²³ In December, a conference of delegates from each London bus branch met at Andertons Hotel. Bevin made substantial concessions including the re-establishment of a council of lay delegates, the Central Bus Committee (C.B.C.), to run the affairs of London busmen. London buses were to form a subsection of the Passenger Transport Group and that the National Trade Group Secretary would be elected along with the London bus officials. This agreement was ratified in June 1922¹²⁴. John Cliff was duly elected National Trade Group Secretary, beating Sanders by 23,000 to 8,000. Stanley Hirst, defeated by Bevin in the election for the new General Secretary became Financial Secretary of the new union, while

Transport Trade Unionism

J.J. Mills became London District Secretary.

Neither did the Andertons Hotel Agreement end dissatisfaction. The L.G.O.C. proposed wage cuts in 1923 which Bevin seemed unwilling to oppose.¹²⁵ Secondly the appearance of the Pirates proved a fertile source of discontent and in 1923 and 1924 there were a number of small strikes¹²⁶. Competition meant frequent schedule changes and transfers. It was the London tram workers who provided a solution for Bevin. In December 1923, after long negotiations and in opposition to proposed wage cuts, the Union submitted a wage claim for 8/-, a sum still insufficient to raise tram drivers earnings to the level of bus drivers.¹²⁷ The claim was for all tram companies and backed up in February with a strike called for March 15th. Meanwhile mass meetings of the bus section authorised their leaders to call a strike in sympathy. The strike was delayed for six days during which time the Ministry of Transport under Harry Gosling, also President of the T. & G.W.U. ordered a Court of Inquiry. On 20th. March the Private Companies offered arbitration and the L.C.C. offered a five shillings increase. The following day 16,000 tram workers and 23,000 bus workers went on strike.¹²⁸

It was the 1924 strike that marked the final consolidation of the T.G.W.U. 'Boss Bevin', as he was called by the press;

"...was not interested in public opinion, but in strengthening his position with his own members. Pictures of Bevin, with his chin stuck out, declaring roundly that he would not make a single concession in his demands, might anger the ordinary newspaper reader, but not the docker or tramwayman whose interests he was representing. The union was solidly behind him. His reputation as a tough and successful leader shot up - and so did the unions recruiting figures."¹²⁹

Bevin was not unduly influenced by loyalty to the first Labour Government either; 'governments may come and governments may go, but the workers' fight for better

Transport Trade Unionism

conditions goes on all the time..' claimed 'The Record'.¹³⁰ When MacDonalld intervened with a personal letter to Bevin, to which he replied, '...our demand was before the employers before we even knew there was a likelihood of a Labour Government coming in, so why should you accept the responsibility?'¹³¹ The Government responded by declaring a State of Emergency¹³² and passing the London Traffic Act, discussed in the previous chapter. Finally on the 28th March, an increase of six shillings for drivers and conductors was accepted by a vote of two to one in favour, the trams resuming on April 1st.

Bevin had won the first of two major confrontations with the Labour Government, had firmly established his leadership of the union and had demonstrated the power of industrial action to turn back wage cuts. Rather than use the political power of his union inside the Labour Party to press for legislative action, he had instead relied on industrial action against the Combine to force a political solution. As far as the old U.V.W. unions were concerned this was a break from both traditions. The old A.A.T. reliance on municipal ownership had been ignored, but equally the strike in no way resembled the old rank and file spontaneity of the L.P.U. strikes. As Bevin wrote in his New Year address in 1925;

"From the commencement of amalgamation up to the beginning of 1924, the Union passed through a very difficult time...in the first three months of 1924 it can really be said that the Union emerged successful and strengthened..."¹³³

Tony Corfield claims that the strike; '...showed the new union had a fighting leadership ready to put its members interests before any other loyalty...'¹³⁴ This assessment, says Fuller is '...seriously defective. If anything, the very success of the tram strike led to greater tension between Bevin and the London Bus Section..' Both these statements are misleading. Corfield attempts to write out of account the long history of internal dissent within the London Bus Section demonstrated immediately by the refusal

Transport Trade Unionism

of the G.E.C. to sanction a London bus strike for improved conditions which led to the resignation of the entire Central Bus Committee in protest.¹³⁵ Fuller, by contrast, misses the crucial transition from secession to fighting within the union structure, from 1924 onwards, the focus of militants, not just in London, was the struggle to transform the union, rather than threaten to leave it.¹³⁶ This was clearest in the rash of local London bus disputes that followed the refusal to pursue the wage claim.¹³⁷

2e : The 1924 Strike and the Provincial Bus Workers

The success of the 1924 strike had a marked effect on the recruitment and militancy of the provincial bus workers, although this process is largely missing from the numerous company histories. The evidence here is based on an examination of the membership figures, together with the Unions Annual Reports, details of strikes given in the Ministry of Labour Gazette and the reports in 'The Record'. Table Eleven shows the growth of the different regions of the Road Passenger Trade Group. These membership figures should be set in the context of a labour force in the bus industry which grew from 30,480 in 1921 to 130,905 ten years later, and in the tram industry a labour force of 88,386 in 1921 declining to 84,448 in 1931.¹³⁸ Not all unionised workers were in the T.G.W.U. but the exceptions were no more than a few thousand.

Area One (later Areas were renamed Regions) covering London and the South East contained nearly half the road passenger membership. An examination of the rates of growth in the different areas shows that Area One had a much faster rate of growth than any other area. From 1922 to 1925 the membership increased in London and the South East by 65.2% compared to 25.9% in the next biggest Area based on Manchester, the next fastest growth was in Scotland at 36.1% but this had a fraction of the membership of Area One.

Transport Trade Unionism

----- TABLE ELEVEN -----

MEMBERSHIP OF THE ROAD PASSENGER TRANSPORT GROUP OF THE T. & G.W.U. BY AREA : 1922 - 1926. ¹³⁹					
AREA	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926
1 : South East	28,155	34,929	45,083	46,515	36,999
2 : South Coast	1,459	1,475	1,507	1,664	577
3 : South West	2,042	984	896	847	580
4 : South Wales	1,230	1,502	1,888	2,388	2,207
5 : Midlands	6,502	7,129	7,898	8,587	6,326
6 : North West	10,436	10,466	11,399	13,144	11,728
7 : Scotland	4,901	4,985	6,151	6,669	4,352
8 : North East	2,674	2,975	3,137	3,714	3,065
9 : Yorkshire	6,522	6,574	7,328	7,782	7,201
10 : Humberside	903	864	1,121	1,130	675
11 : Ireland	1,893	2,087	2,289	2,500	2,310
12 : Merseyside	722	859	140	-	40
13 : North Wales	-	57	43	73	32
Area 1 as % of TOTAL	41.8% 67,349	46.7% 74,886	50.7% 88,880	49.0% 94,933	48.6% 76,092

Prior to 1924 the provincial bus sector was as much affected by falling wages as the trams, the character of strikes was largely defensive¹⁴⁰. The Union was not optimistic;

"For years these men have been the despair of Trade Union organisers. We have just however recently been able to organise the men employed by the East Surrey Traction Company, the Maidstone and District Bus Company, and a number of men employed by the Autocar Services Ltd.(Tonbridge Wells) In the first two cases we have obtained union recognition."¹⁴¹

John Cliff, now the National Officer of the Road Passenger Transport Group, began to take shape the strategy of the bus section as his 1923 Report shows;

"Provincial Busmen - These present a problem which the union is endeavouring to tackle in all parts of the country, and many agreements have been made for the provincial busmen, particularly with the Midland Red, Trent Motor Car Company, Northern General Company etc...We continually come across cases where men are working from 60 to 80 hours a week...We shall continue our efforts until we establish a national condition for bus workers outside Metropolitan Area."¹⁴²

Transport Trade Unionism

The attempts to promote a National Agreement and eventually an N.J.I.C. were to last over 20 years. The employers, especially B.E.T. and Tillings were deeply hostile¹⁴³.

In 1923 striking was by no means an easy option. A strike at Westcliffe-on-Sea over wage reductions, became a fight for unionisation and improved conditions and ended in victory. Employees of the Maidstone & District at Gravesend, Gillingham, Hastings and Maidstone struck for a forty eight hour week and an advancement of wages only to find that; `...the company introduced blackleg labour...'¹⁴⁴. The Union instituted an omnibus service and operated it for twelve weeks which `...inflicted on the Maidstone company a large monetary loss'. After fourteen weeks the result was neither victory nor disaster, the Company agreed to find 130 men alternative jobs in London or with associated companies. A strike on Bristol Tramways ended in complete disaster with 170 dismissed and the Union smashed. This was blamed by Cliff on `rank and filism' because the leadership of the strike was taken out of the hands of the officials.¹⁴⁵ Cliff used the debacle as a stick to beat the old red button union tradition. Yet that tradition still thrived in the South East as the short victorious disputes at garage or depot level at L.G.O.C. in Dalston, at S.M.E.T. trams in Sutton and Penge, at M.E.T. trams at Edgeware and Stonebridge, and at Tillings in Croyden all showed. In Derby the same successful tactic was adopted at Trent Motor Traction.

The 1924 London strike involving nearly one third of the trade group membership could only encourage this trend. There were a further four disputes in 1924 and no less than seventeen in 1925. The increase in militancy was not enough to force the big companies towards some sort of national pay and recognition agreement. Nevertheless local recognition was being forced from them often through unofficial strikes, as the following details show. In January 1925 a one day strike at Trent Motor Traction in Nottingham forced the reinstatement of a conductor who was also a union collector.

Transport Trade Unionism

At South Shields the dismissal of a collector nearly ended in an official strike but the company gave way. In Darlington, a one day strike reversed changes in duties. The L.G.O.C. had two disputes at Seven Kings and Plumstead and Sidcup, and two more near disputes in Holloway and Hendon. In February there were two unofficial strikes at the M.E.T. workshops in Hendon over a dismissal which was withdrawn. At Brynmawr there was a three day strike over dismissal which resulted in reinstatement. In April there was the threat of a dispute over dismissal at Western Vallies Garage and Engineering Company which was averted by the findings of an Industrial Court. There was a half day strike in Carlisle for a closed shop. In May there was a half day strike at Crosville in Nantwich over a member in arrears, who agreed to pay up.¹⁴⁶ This spate of usually unofficial short disputes demonstrates the feelings and confidence of local union branches.

Rather than build on this localised militancy Cliff hoped to use his influence on the N.J.I.C. as a means of reaching a national agreement. Municipal operation of buses which was expanding would provide a means to extend the N.J.I.C. into at least one segment of the bus industry allowing a bridgehead to the rest. As the Annual Report admitted; 'The company-owned concerns, however, would not agree to become party to such an agreement'.¹⁴⁷ In June 1925 Harold Clay was confirmed as National Trade Group Secretary, a position he had been carrying out for some time. His background was identical to Cliff's¹⁴⁸. Clearly the same policy of seeking a national agreement would continue. Despite this strategy, it was localised militancy which explained the rapid growth in membership, 10,000 new members in the South East alone, during 1924. The spate of strikes continued¹⁴⁹. In early 1926 there was an agreement in principle by the North Staffordshire Omnibus Proprietors Association to recognition and a wages and conditions agreement, the first agreement with an employer's association. Thus the price of consolidation of the Union

Transport Trade Unionism

through the 1924 strike was the extension of the militant London tradition to the provincial sector. The remainder of this chapter will examine the history of the T.G.W.U. Road Passenger Group up to 1939.

3 : The T.G.W.U. in Retreat and Recovery

This final section of the chapter will concentrate on the development and defeat of rank and file movements in the bus section of the Union. Why did militancy develop in the industry during a period of general union retreat? What is the nature of the relationship between change in the labour process and militancy? Why did the Rank and File Movement develop in London but not in the provincial industry and why were there so few links between London and the provincial movements? Why and how did the leadership of the Union defeat this rising militancy? This section examines in turn the road passenger section and the General Strike, unionisation and militancy in the provincial industry and the Rank and File Movement in London.

3a: The General Strike

Discussion of the General Strike is useful here simply in order to provide a snapshot of the strengths and weaknesses of the tram and bus section of the Union. The strike has been discussed in detail elsewhere¹⁵⁰. The response of the membership varied. In areas where the union had not yet penetrated or where there had been recent defeats, transport workers remained at work. The tramways were largely marked by passive involvement except in those areas which had displayed militancy in the post-war period. London, not surprisingly, demonstrated the highest degree of involvement in the strike. The operation of buses and trams was seen by many local authorities as central to defeating the strike and the level of resistance to these moves depended upon

Transport Trade Unionism

both the general level of organisation in the strike in each locality and also the degree of involvement of transport workers themselves. Phillips gives a general survey of public transport;

"...passenger transport services responded half-heartedly to the strike call or returned to work well before the 12th. May. This was true not only in towns that were little industrialized like Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Maidstone, Brighton, Portsmouth and Perth but even in larger cities and trade-union strongholds. Eighty per cent of Liverpool tramwaymen were back at work by 8th. May; the Southampton men, members of the T. & G.W.U. came out only partially at the beginning of the strike, as did those of Bristol, and the latter, at least, resumed work completely within a few days."¹⁵¹

This analysis is misleading. The response was much more than half-hearted, indeed it was unprecedented. Many of the weaknesses were the result of previous defeats as in Bristol, Maidstone and Liverpool. Christopher Farman's suggestion that; '...in most of the towns and cities of Britain, the paralysis of public transport was complete...' is far more accurate.¹⁵²

In London, the evidence for the number of vehicles running, is again contradictory. According to Farman;

"Of London's 4,400 buses, 300 were running with volunteer crews on Tuesday, but the number was down to 40 by the end of the week...9 of the capitals 2,000 tramcars were operating."¹⁵³

Phillips gives details of Ministry of Transport figures which suggest that 47 buses were put out of action on the first day of the strike, but that one in four of the normal number were operating by the eighth day of the strike but only one in twenty trams. The figures being; buses 1,272 out of 4,404 and trams 94 out of 2,269.¹⁵⁴ Most of the buses were either Independents or operated by 'volunteers'.¹⁵⁵ Hibbs claims that the Independents, with their 'full complement of 450 buses, a hundred of them being driven by their owners...' operated out of Regents Park, along with 600 L.G.O.C. buses.¹⁵⁶ Eventually, says Hibbs, '600 drivers and conductors were sleeping in the Park, under canvas or in their buses.'¹⁵⁷ To have operated 1,050 buses with 600 staff

Transport Trade Unionism

would of course have been miraculous! Symons claims that of the Pirates, little was seen; '...their number was insignificant'.¹⁵⁸ Eyewitness accounts suggest that in reality only in the West End were there significant numbers of buses on the road.

Despite all the preparations, including the setting up of the O.M.S. (the Organisation of Maintenance and Supply) it proved virtually impossible to run trams or buses. Symons suggests why:

"Going out on the road in London was not pleasant, particularly in working class districts. Strike pickets crowded round the depots, with the object of keeping the trams and buses at home. They were particularly successful with trams which were by their nature easily susceptible to interference."¹⁵⁹

One favoured method was to place point rods down the centre rail to immobilize the trams. Buses were also subject to immobilisation, according to Symon's account of events at the L.G.O.C.'s Uxbridge Garage.¹⁶⁰ At New Cross depot on the 7th. May;

"Convoys of O.M.S. volunteers and British Fascists, armed with iron bars and with police protection, entered the depot to get the trams out...a vast crowd of some two or three thousand people mobilised outside the depot. The Transport Union pickets had already taken steps to prevent the trams from moving by jamming objects down into the live pick-up rails. Mounted police tried to clear the way but the crowd was too big, blocking the wide New Cross Road, and in the end the attempt had to be abandoned. It sparked off a severe and prolonged riot that spread up Deptford Broadway and and lasted well into the evening."¹⁶¹

At the Elephant and Castle mounted police and special reserves together with the army were unable to clear a passage for an L.G.O.C. bus.¹⁶² At Hammersmith, Farman recounts '...seven buses were wrecked, strikers and fascists fought a pitched battle, and police made 43 arrests'.¹⁶³ Whilst in Chiswick the bus depot was guarded by troops according to Raymond Postgate.¹⁶⁴ In the East End no buses moved down Kingsland Road without a police escort, due to picketting from Dalston Garage.¹⁶⁵

Transport Trade Unionism

London can be regarded as a model of militant, self-reliant trade unionism, involving a large proportion of the union members in preventing the operation of any serious volunteer service. The traditions of 1924 continued through the strike. Elsewhere there were many attempts to prevent the operation of buses and trams. Farman refers to events in Leeds, Nottingham, Manchester, Stoke, Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh. 'Fighting erupted at the bus terminus' in Middlesborough, 'In Aberdeen, police baton-charged a crowd of more than 6,000 who were smashing the windows of passing buses and trams', in Glasgow's East End 500 miners from '...Newton and Cambuslang tried to storm a tram depot...', rioting in Hull led to the burning of trams and the threat of direct military intervention from the Light Cruiser Ceres.¹⁶⁶ Not all of this was the result of union organisation in transport. Much of the bus and tram section remained passive, resulting in the aftermath of the strike, in attacks on either the very existence of the union and on wages and conditions. Ironically it was those areas where the officials were least in control which survived the defeat of the strike most successfully. The reason for this lies in the T.U.C. conception of the general strike as 'non-political', under this conception all that was necessary was to withdraw labour and wait.

Thus in Halifax, the management of the tramways asked the local strike committee to return the uniforms of the tramwaymen, in order to clothe the volunteers. The committee obliged;

"On Thursday May 6th. the tramwaymen, at the request of the Tramway Committee delivered up their uniforms. They marched in procession supported by 4,000 strikers, and led by the local Labour Mayor, Councillor W. Smith, passed in their uniforms in perfect order and amid great enthusiasm."¹⁶⁷

In Brighton;

"Tilling's bus strikers...presented the Chief Constable with a silver salver after the strike; and generally, the atmosphere was more often one of mutual tolerance and even amity".¹⁶⁸

Transport Trade Unionism

Brighton was the one place where Tilling's repudiated their agreement with the T. & G.W.U. after the strike!¹⁶⁹

The organisation of the strike in Birmingham is interesting. The strike call met with an almost total response. On May 5th despite a large police presence, Midland Red failed to operate even a skeleton service.¹⁷⁰ On May 8th. the Chief Constable ordered the removal of pickets from Tenant Street Garage and a regular bus service was commenced. On the 10th. May Corporation Tram and Bus Inspectors agreed to return to work after a meeting of transport workers representatives had voted 18 to 7 to return to work the previous evening.

"Pickets were removed from Dawlish Road Tramway Depot and a regular service recommenced between Selly Oak and the City. Elsewhere services resumed at Moseley Village, the King's Head, Hagley Road, Yardley Wood and Handsworth Wood, predominantly residential suburbs where least opposition could be expected... only at Washwood Heath was the depot opened in the face of opposition."¹⁷¹

The Tramways Committee, sensing victory, sent an ultimatum to their employees, unless they returned by the 12th. May they would be deemed 'to have left the service'. By noon on the 11th. May vehicles were running on practically all routes with the exception of a hard core at Washwood Heath and Coventry Road Depots. Midland Red drivers began to resume work on the 12th. May. Thus the strike had effectively collapsed by the end of the the first week. The result was that Midland Red attempted to promote a form of company unionism, not the first time such a tactic was associated with B.E.T. which owned the company. The Tramways Department also refused to recognise the T. & G.W.U. but backed down when a deputation from the Emergency Committee threatened 'guerilla warfare'.¹⁷²

In Wolverhampton, by comparison, the use of similar tactics to end the strike failed. The crucial event was the attempt to run ten buses out of Cleveland Street Depot on 10th. May which was prevented by 1,000 pickets¹⁷³. No

Transport Trade Unionism

further attempts were made to operate buses. In Glasgow, even with the support of all but two Inspectors, the O.M.S. which had taken over the trams could only get two hundred out of eleven hundred trams running by the end of the week, but at the cost of over three hundred arrests.¹⁷⁴ In Cardiff, although the trams were running, this was only after the arrival of the Cruiser Cleopatra. Only six regular tram workers returned during the strike.

At the sudden termination of the strike, the areas where organisation and involvement were high were able to secure reinstatement en bloc. The L.C.C. were the first to reinstate the tram workers and revive union agreements, although not without first attempting to operate services without them.¹⁷⁵ The L.G.O.C. also reinstated bus workers on the 14th. May, apparently with no victimisation. Tillings withdrew union recognition in London which resulted in a further strike.¹⁷⁶

Elsewhere the situation was worse. According to Phillips;

"Municipal Tramway Committees in particular had sought to replace union members in a number of cities prior to 12th. May, and were not disposed to restore them. On Merseyside, for example, the volunteers employed in Wallasey and Bootle were retained subsequently. In Glasgow, according to Patrick Dollan, 368 of about 5,000 tramwaymen were suspended or dismissed after the strike. In Newport 300 volunteers were kept in place of members of the General and Municipal Workers, while the Brighton Council forced its tramway staff to leave the union, the T. & G.W.U. The National Joint Council of the Industry did not meet until October, and only then did the employers abandon their attempt to prevent the organisation of Inspector's branches during the year. Their ability to revive district agreements varied greatly."¹⁷⁷

On Merseyside there were wholesale victimisations.¹⁷⁸ In Cardiff the Tramways Committee insisted on a complete surrender, whilst "...the tramwaymen refused to return unless all were reinstated."¹⁷⁸

The position of provincial bus workers, especially outside the major cities, was dismal;

Transport Trade Unionism

"Here too, organisation had been imperfect, the strike sometimes only partial, and volunteers plentiful...Bevin told the T.U.C. Assistant Secretary at the end of May that provincial busworkers had been the principal casualties of victimisation. In all, about 1,900 passenger transport worker's, (busmen and tramwaymen) belonging to the union, had not been reinstated."¹⁷⁹

Union membership by the end of the year, had dropped in the road passenger transport section from 94,933 to 76,092, a loss of nearly 19,000 members. How was the Union to recover?

3b : Strikes and Unionisation in the Provincial Sector

The General Strike resulted in a loss of 60,000 members, almost one third in the Road Passenger Transport Section of the T.G.W.U. By 1930, passenger transport was the only trade group to have recouped the losses of 1926.¹⁸⁰ However new recruits to the industry outpaced recruits to the Union as Table Twelve shows. Only after 1934 did union density begin

----- TABLE TWELVE -----

MEMBERSHIP OF THE T. & G.W.U. ROAD PASSENGER TRADE GROUP AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE INDUSTRY ⁺ 1926 - 1938 ¹⁸¹					
YEAR	G.B. EMPLOYED AGE 16-64 [*]			TRADE GROUP MEMBERSHIP	UNION DENSITY %
	MALE	FEMALE	ALL		
1925	-	-	114,400	94,933	83.0
1926	115,879	4,918	120,797	76,092	63.0
1927	123,952	5,384	129,336	77,049	59.6
1928	130,006	5,740	135,746	83,919	61.8
1929	141,614	6,401	148,015	93,549	63.2
1930	148,523	6,089	154,612	100,835	65.2
1932	160,712	6,814	167,526	100,469	60.0
1934	162,700	8,219	170,919	118,124	69.1
1936	174,842	9,358	184,200	142,000	77.1
1938	-	-	201,495	150,836	74.8

+ Tram and Bus Industry
^{*} 1925-7 Figures are for age group 16 and over,
 1928-38 Figures are for age group 16 - 64.

to increase. Membership of the National Union of Railwaymen

Transport Trade Unionism

and the General and Municipal Workers' Union, not included here, does not significantly alter the picture.

Not surprisingly the defeat of the General Strike forced a fundamental shift in the leadership of the Union. Whilst refusing to agree to 'industrial truce', Bevin thought that;

"If there is a new conception of the objects of industry, then there can be created in this country and in other countries, conditions which minimise strikes and probably make them non-existent for twenty five years."

Thus Bevin concluded; the best way forward was the construction of a centralised corporate bargaining system, an extension of the principles of the N.J.I.C. movement. It was a suggestion with which Cliff and Clay must have concurred, as they toured the country with Bevin in 1927 trying to rebuild the confidence of the union.¹⁸² Bevin also played a key role in the Mond-Turner talks, between the T.U.C. and prominent industrialists including Ashfield of the L.G.O.C. and other bus employers. Bevin's aim in the talks was, according to his biographer, '...not formal negotiations but a frank exchange of views and information...over the whole range of economic questions affecting industry'¹⁸³. Closely related was Bevin's role on the MacMillan Committee on Finance and Industry, in 1930, where he came in close contact with Keynes.¹⁸⁴ Bevin considered his own role as General Secretary to be close to that of the General Manager.¹⁸⁵

The strategy of the Union in the bus industry was modelled on the experience of the N.J.I.C. The N.J.I.C. employers gradually conceded retraining agreements for tram workers as tram systems declined as well as extending the N.J.I.C. to cover municipal bus employees.¹⁸⁶ Acceptance of wage reductions in the fiscal crisis of 1931/2 was rewarded with discussions for a national municipal bus agreement in 1934 and 1935.¹⁸⁷ The newly Labour controlled municipalities were also sympathetic to closed shop agreements.¹⁸⁸ A National Municipal Bus Conditions agreement was concluded,

Transport Trade Unionism

after a delegate conference in Manchester in April 1935. In 1936 the private tramway companies withdrew from the N.J.I.C. on the basis that their interests were closer to those of the provincial omnibus operators and by November 1937 there was a Composite N.J.I.C. Bus/Tram Agreement with a guaranteed 40 hour week, between 8 and 12 days Annual Holidays and a National Wage Award of 2/- per week. A model had been created which the union wished to extend to cover the whole workforce in passenger transport.

The provincial companies were in no mood to discuss a national agreement after 1926 and the Road Traffic Act gave little immediate comfort to the Union.¹⁸⁹ In the aftermath of the General Strike most territorial companies repudiated union agreements, withdrew recognition and used the opportunity to purge union militants. Some companies such as Midland Red set up company unions.¹⁹⁰ The major restructuring of the industry from 1928 led to the re-appearance of union agreements as shown in Table Thirteen. Unlike the wave of unionisation in the early 1920's, this period was marked by the absence of industrial conflict. There were '...no spectacular displays or mass conversions, but steady and consistent organising work and in the face of tremendous obstacles...'; claimed 'The Record'.¹⁹¹ The first obstacle was inter-union rivalry, the result of the integration of railway bus operations and consequently N.U.R. members into areas where the T. & G. had previously had a free hand. From 1928 to 1932, negotiations between the two unions were often acrimonious as Bagwell notes.¹⁹² In June 1932 an important inter-union agreement divided the industry into spheres of influence. Of sixty one companies examined by the Joint Committee, eleven of them were placed under the jurisdiction of the N.U.R., as shown in Table Thirteen. Negotiations with the Ribble Company were to be jointly conducted. In Crosville, in June 1932, Claude and W.J. Crosland-Taylor met with Ernest Bevin and Tom McLean from the T. & G.W.U. together with twelve depot representatives and signed the first company wide union agreement with, for

Transport Trade Unionism

TABLE THIRTEEN

DATE OF FIRST MAJOR UNION AGREEMENT AFTER 1926 IN THE LARGEST TERRITORIAL COMPANIES IN ORDER OF FLEET SIZE 1939

COMPANY	1939	'26	'27	'28	'29	'31	'33	'35	'37	'39
<u>Ribble = N.U.R. Jurisdiction</u>	FLEET				'31	'33	'35	'37		
Midland Red (B.M.M.O.)	1,458					*	*			*
Crosville	1,458	*				*	*	*		*
Ribble Motor Services	1,055				*	*	*	*		*
United Automobile Services	972				*					*
Bristol Tramways	859							*		*
Southdown Motor Services	734	*								
Eastern Counties Road Car	601					*		*		*
Western National	555				*	*				
North West Road Car	552									
Maidstone & District	551									*
East Kent Road Car	544									
Western Welsh Omnibus	482				*	*	*	*		*
Eastern National	452	*			*	*	*	*		*
Northern General	445		*	*	*	*	*	*		*
Trent Motor Traction	365		*		*	*	*	*		*
Southern National	357				*	*				*
West Yorkshire Road Car	354							*		*
South Wales Transport	322				*	*	*	*		*
Red & White Services	300			*	*	*	*	*		*
Hants & Dorset	300									
Lincolnshire Road Car Company	299					*				
Aldershot & District Traction	291				*					*
Yorkshire Traction Company	287						*	*		*
Yorkshire (Woolen District)	286						*	*		*
West Riding Automobile Co.	255						*	*		*
United Counties Omnibus	247							*		*
Devon General	240							*		*
Lancashire United Transport	223		*	*			*	*		*
East Yorkshire Motor Services	216				*	*	*	*		*
The Potteries Elec. Trac.	213				*	*	*	*		*
Wilts & Dorset Motor Services	199									
Thames Valley Traction	192							*		*
City of Oxford Motor Services	185						*	*		*
Midland General Omnibus	180							*		*
East Midland Motor Services	159		*		*	*		*		*
Cumberland Motor Services	145									
Barton Transport Ltd.	140									
Rhondda Tramways Company	137				*					*
United Welsh Services	130							*		*
J. Bullock & Sons.	128									
Birch Brothers.	120									
Southern Vectis Omnibus	116					*	*	*		*
Westcliffe-on-Sea Motor Serv.	112				*	*	*	*		*
Sunderland & District	89					*	*	*		*
East Surrey Traction	NoteA	*			*	*				
Autocar Services Ltd.	NoteA				*	*				
Redcar Services Ltd.	NoteB									

Source - Union Annual Reports 1926-39

Transport Trade Unionism

the first time, hourly rates (instead of daily rates) unified across the company¹⁹³. Thus rationalisation of the companies led in turn to a rationalisation of the bargaining procedures.

Inter-union rivalry was not the main problem however, the real core of the problem was the hostility of some of the territorial companies to any unions. In 1931 there was a long and bitter strike on the Southern Vectis Company.¹⁹⁴ Nevertheless workers looked to trade unions in increasing numbers to protect them from wage cuts and intensification of work and to provide legal assistance in cases arising from the new driving offences in the 1934 Road Traffic Act which could result in suspension of driving licenses. The 1930 Act had taken away many of the reasons for companies to try to prevent unionisation, statutory limitations on hours reduced the possibilities for extending the working day, the Fair Wages clause reduced the scope for wage cutting at the expense of the competition. Finally, the union itself behaved in a 'responsible manner', opposing lightning strikes. Further, whilst there was very little chance of strikes over wages, increasingly after 1926 members were prepared to strike over the defence of union rights.¹⁹⁵

Even as late as 1932 one member was complaining that in Bournemouth '...unfortunately this branch has never fully recovered from the setback it received in 1926...' even though '...the privileges we lost in 1926 such as recognition, posting notices, the right to collect contributions on the job etc. have long since been restored to us.'¹⁹⁶ In the new year of 1931, the union journal could record optimistically that;

"We have been able to establish contact with a number of companies with whom we have hitherto experienced difficulties regarding recognition. The ban on Trade Union membership which had been imposed in certain companies has now been removed. There are now very few undertakings where that attitude is adopted and we look forward with confidence, to the removal of the ban in all cases during 1931."¹⁹⁷

Transport Trade Unionism

In South Wales, the Midlands and Yorkshire and the North West the major companies now signed agreements. Section 93 of the 1930 Act made the application of the Fair Wages Resolution of 1909 a necessary part of licensing. The clause which stated that wages and conditions should not be less favourable than those commonly recognised by employers and trade societies, or those of 'good employers' led to action against the Redcar Company in the Industrial Court in early 1932. The Autocar Company, which had signed an agreement with the T. & G. in March 1931, shared routes with the Redcar Company which was now compelled to implement the same conditions. In November six Watford Companies were taken to the Industrial Court for the same reasons and five were compelled to increase wages.¹⁹⁸ In December 1932 a joint union agreement was signed with five major North East Territorials¹⁹⁹. In July 1933 the N.U.R. and the T. & G. signed a joint agreement covering Ribble Motor Services.

The major area of problems for the union was in the Home Counties and East Anglia where nearly all the companies remained hostile and in the South West where the legacy of the 1923 Bristol defeat remained. The hostility of Eastern Counties, United Counties, United Automobile Services, the East Kent, Maidstone & District, Tillings of Brighton and City of Oxford was no doubt fuelled by the continual strikes organised by the London Busmen's Rank and File Organisation of which more later on. As 'The Record' stated;

"The difficulty on these undertakings and one or two others controlled by the same group of employers, is to obtain the right to deal with the firms on those questions which affect our members. Some little progress has been made in certain places, but in the main we have not been able to break through the anti-trade union attitude displayed by those in control."²⁰⁰

In November 1934 joint delegate conferences of the N.U.R. and T. & G. were held for U.A.S., Eastern National, Eastern Counties and the West Yorkshire Road Car Company. Meetings were held in Oxford, Leeds, Greys and Ipswich to denounce the anti-union companies. Maidstone & District, the Power

Transport Trade Unionism

Omnibus Company and Eastern Counties were all taken to the Industrial Court under Section 93 in September 1934. By June 1935 United Counties, Eastern Counties and U.A.S had all conceded recognition.²⁰¹

Up to 1935 the unionisation of the territorial companies proceeded slowly and carefully. The agreements that were reached were rarely any improvement on the statutory control of hours and wages under the 1930 Act. Any action, such as a strike, would threaten the aim of persuading the territorials to come into an N.J.I.C. By the mid 1930's however, there was increasing frustration by the membership at the lack of real improvements in conditions. Many of the first agreements made in the early 1930's were for wage cuts, although driving hours were limited, the length of the working day into which those hours were framed, was not. The rationalisations carried out involved tremendous speed ups and at the same time the average size of vehicles increased. In 1936 and 1937 this frustration boiled over into a series of large unofficial regional strikes; South Wales in 1936; Scotland in March 1937; the Home Counties in April and May 1937. In a few cases municipal bus and tram workers joined the disputes. In the case of company wide strikes, these often spread over long distances, so for example the Southern National strike began in Plymouth and Tavistock on the 29th. April 1938 and spread by the 13th. May to Bideford and Totnes in Devon; Taunton, Yeovil and Bridgewater in Somerset; and to Weymouth and Bournemouth.²⁰² Most of these strikes were aimed at both the employers and the Union Executive which refused to sanction any of them.

The Welsh strike was a typical example. It began in Ammanford on August 3rd. 1935 over the question of union recognition at J. James in North Carmarthen²⁰³. The strikers demanded parity with South Wales Transport, the major company in the area which had recognised the T. & G.W.U. in 1929. At the last half yearly conference the officials had agreed to a resolution which called for a uniform agreement

Transport Trade Unionism

for the South Wales area. Yet in June the Union had signed an agreement covering nine firms at rates of pay below that of South Wales Transport and in the Ammanford area a further five firms were covered in an agreement which would result in wage increases for some and cuts for others at rates below the main company. James bought in blackleg staff, resulting in a demonstration in which buses and the garage windows were damaged, at this point the strike was joined by omnibus and tramway workers in Neath, Carmarthen, Llanelli and Swansea, bringing the total on strike to around 1,800²⁰⁴. As the strike leaders explained;

"The attitude of the E.C. of the T. & G.W.U. to the agitation has been from its inception that any strike action would not be countenanced and that the union officials would wipe their hands of the negotiations... It was impossible to keep the men at work and the class-collaboration attitude of the union is killing the men."²⁰⁵

Not only did the Executive firmly refuse to recognise the strike leading to defeat in September. They also set up a union inquiry which resulted in the suspension of two of the strike leaders, branch officials James and Matthews, who were debarred from office for two years. The branch was split into four separate branches based at Swansea, Neath, Ammanford and Gorseinon, a split which recognised the differential agreements signed by the union officials.²⁰⁶

A strike at United Counties in 1936 illuminates the changes taking place in the provincial industry. The strike was led by the United Counties Central Employee's Committee which published a pamphlet requesting support. We are, they said, "...just cogs in a machine which is run with one object, viz., the churning out of profits for the Tillings Group."²⁰⁷ Since Tillings took over;

"...there has been a gradual reduction in wages and worsening of conditions, caused by the speeding up of routes and 'economic reorganisation' without any consideration or recompense to the employees..."

Speed was the major grievance;

"...besides making men redundant the effect of this is

Transport Trade Unionism

to get more and more work from the men in an allotted time...Connections that passengers are led to expect, by reference to the timetables, are found to be non-existent...inspectors can only harrass men...Passengers are continually in danger to life and limb through excessive speeding by defective buses."²⁰⁸

In March 1935 the Union was recognised and negotiations begun for a new agreement. A new agreement was signed, without consultation with the men, who responded by threatening to strike. A further agreement was signed in January 1936 by the local official resulting in cuts in wages and longer hours of duty (driving hours were of course limited by the 1930 Act but there were fewer rules about the length of the day in which these hours were framed)²⁰⁹. As one of the strikers recalled;

"...when the Union officials assured us that this was all they could afford to pay and all we had a right to expect, we began to wonder whose side they were on..."²¹⁰

The ensuing strike was based on demands for better pay, payment for spreadovers together with a reduction in their number, a guaranteed week of 48 hours and a reduction in speed. The union was engaged in what Clegg correctly describes as a long-term policy of "...achieving a national negotiating body for provincial busmen...The union thus took a high-minded attitude to minor disputes."²¹¹

The United Counties strike is most remarkable for the way in which the leadership planned to take on not only the Tillings Combine but also the leadership of their own union. Thus the strike was planned in secret without the knowledge of the union officials.²¹² The strikers also broke through Tillings attempts to use employees from other companies, usually spare staff without a guaranteed week or permanent job²¹³. They also prevented Tillings running services by a variety of ingenious methods²¹⁴. On January 13th. the Traffic Commissioners held a local inquiry into the dispute, under Section 64 of the 1930 Road Traffic Act and used the Act to force a settlement²¹⁵. The strike was resolved on

Transport Trade Unionism

January 15th. when the Company agreed to reemploy all the men, though not to dismiss the strikebreakers. The dispute was a model for other provincial employees. Each garage was represented on a Central Strike Committee. All decisions were made democratically. Regular meetings kept the membership informed as did strike leaflets issued by the Committee. The support of other branches, including the threat of strike action, prevented the replacement of the strikers²¹⁶. The United Counties strike was the first example of developing organisation amongst the provincial bus workers which was prepared to defy the national leadership.

The Scottish strike of March 1937 was a complete contrast. The strike was a spontaneous revolt which began at Falkirk and within two days embraced 9,000 employees from the Borders to the far north of Scotland. The cause of the strike was dissatisfaction over the annual wage negotiations.²¹⁷ In 1935 the result of a strike ballot had been concealed by the Union, the 1937 walk-out was supposed to prevent a repeat performance. The T.G.W.U. Area Secretary called for an immediate return to work in advance of the recall of the Delegate Conference which had launched the strike. In the absence of official sanction for the strike, the delegate conference called for garage committees to be set up to organise finance, picketing and publicity. They also formed a Central Strike Committee (C.S.C.). Both the Union Executive and Lord Thompson, S.M.T. Chairman, blamed the strike on communist agitation.²¹⁸ Would the C.S.C. be able to successfully conduct the strike against both employees and the union as at United Counties?

Despite initial success, the answer was negative.²¹⁹ As one of the strike leaders suggested to the 'Daily Worker';

"...The weakness of the whole situation since the beginning is the absence of any real centralised leadership. Even the C.S.C. was set up too late, and has, as yet, no real machinery to tackle the thousand and one problems of strike organisation and

Transport Trade Unionism

activity."²²⁰

This analysis was confirmed almost immediately when Perth, Dundee and Montrose garages returned to work. Bevin immediately seized this opportunity to recall the delegate conference for a third time to consider the implications of the Traffic Commissioners request to the Company to try to restore services. The C.S.C. thought that the Company was; '...torn between the desire to get skeleton services running over the weekend and its desire to do maximum possible damage to busmen's organisation...' The C.S.C. conceded defeat which they considered was caused by;

"The refusal of the Executive Council to make the strike official or to grant financial assistance, also the very late date at which the C.S.C. was set up, has led to a serious lack of finance which endangers the position, particularly in view of the return to work by members at certain garages in an undisciplined manner and without waiting for the decision of the delegate conference."²²¹

The Scottish strike demonstrated decisively that a rank and file leadership acting independently of the union leadership could not be constructed during the course of a strike.

One month later, the biggest unofficial strike outside of London began in Kent at Maidstone & District Motor Services over a demand for a nine hour day²²². The strike was immediately condemned as unofficial, one union official claiming '...we consider the Company has been reasonable in its attitudes towards the mens demands and the door is still open to negotiations.'²²³ The grievances were strikingly similar to United Counties.²²⁴ East Yorkshire busmen demanded full support for the stoppage from the Executive and 3,500 East Kent Road Car Company employees came out on strike for one day in support²²⁵. 160 Eastern National men at Chelmsford and 150 at Greys joined the strike '...in support of the Maidstone & District men and safety of the General Public as a protest against our own rotten wages and working conditions.'²²⁶ The strike was spread across both Eastern National and Eastern Counties garages, culminating in a mass meeting at Luton which voted to join the strike.

Transport Trade Unionism

This meeting was attended by delegates from Chelmsford, Bedford, Grays, Maidstone and Aylesbury who resolved;

"The only solution to our problems is a national agreement. In one sense the present wave of strikes is the result of long delays in national negotiations. None of us know what is going on. While a lot of talk goes on about improvements our conditions are being worsened and local agreements violated by different managements."²²⁷

Back in January, a National Delegate Conference, held in Leeds had reported on progress towards a National Bus Agreement with the provincial companies. It seemed clear that the provincial companies had no intention of ending the fiction of separate companies since they used this to depress wages. The lack of progress was blamed by Bevin on unauthorised strikes.²²⁸ The strikers were joined by East Kent and also by two branches party to the N.J.I.C.; Luton Corporation and Hastings Tramways.²²⁹ All the branches, now in constant contact through a system of motor-cycle dispatch riders, demanded an easement of conditions and a national agreement. By Tuesday 27th. April 6,000 busmen in ten counties were on strike, five separate bus committees called for a national unofficial Delegate Conference in Chelmsford the following day. The purpose, according to Oxford, was to pressurise the Executive into calling for a national strike ballot over the issue of a national agreement. If Bevin failed to agree then Oxford City, Thames Valley and United Counties threatened to join the unofficial strike.²³⁰

The national meeting on Wednesday 28th. April attracted over 100 delegates from 12 different bus fleets including representatives from the S.M.T. The Conference claimed to represent 30,000 provincial busmen. They decided that there should be open negotiations for a national agreement. A Central Combine Bus Committee (C.C.B.C.) was elected and a list of national demands were formulated.²³¹ It emerged at this meeting that the N.E.C. had only received a reply to their request for a meeting with the employers after the provincial strikes had begun.²³² Over the weekend, Oxford,

Transport Trade Unionism

United Counties and East Yorkshire employees joined the strike, now 7,000 strong. At midnight on Friday, 25,000 London busmen began an official strike²³³. The two events now became inextricably linked.

Over the next week, it became clear that the provincial strike was not going to spread further. Tillings, meanwhile, issued a public statement stating that they had received no demands from the N.E.C. of the Union. The C.C.B.C. met with Harold Clay and reluctantly agreed to recommend an organised return to work on the basis of immediate negotiations to improve conditions on a national basis to settle outstanding grievances and provided there were no victimisations. East Kent Road Car conceded union recognition but Tillings remained adamant that there would be no national agreement which led to a brief resumption of the strike.²³⁴ The C.C.B.C. now renewed their demand that Clay call for a national official strike since Tillings had made it clear that no national agreement would be forthcoming. Clay refused.

The usual historical judgement has always been that the wave of provincial strikes `...greatly hampered the Union's efforts to secure a national negotiating body for the provincial busmen in the private companies' employment..' as Bullock puts it²³⁵. A more plausible explanation for Bevin and Clay's refusal to contemplate a national strike would centre on events in London. If at this time Bevin was firmly committed to destroying the Rank and File Movement through the Coronation Strike, an idea that we will examine later, then necessarily the Provincial strike had to be ended, for the Coronation Strike was hardly likely to collapse against the background of a national strike by 120,000 bus workers. The danger that a greatly enlarged C.C.B.C. could take control of the strike away from the officials and link up with the London Rank and File Movement was always there. The events of 1936 and 1937 become far more coherent if seen as primarily an internal power struggle in which the

Transport Trade Unionism

bureaucratisation of the union was completed. If Bevin's militancy of 1924 can be explained by the pressures building up within the Union, so can Bevin's determination that all unofficial bodies be eliminated in 1937, even at the cost of losing strikes. Thus the provincial strikes were terminated, not because they prevented the signing of a national bus agreement, but because they conflicted with Bevin's overriding strategic aim in this period; the destruction of the London Rank and File Movement, to which we now turn.

3c : The London Busmen's Rank and File Movement

The Rank and File Movement that developed in London in the 1930's has been extensively written about, consequently the discussion here will focus on the explanations for the Movement's origins, enduring strengths and weaknesses, and ultimate defeat in 1937²³⁶. In 1939 G.D.H. Cole described London Busmen as '...the best organised and most militant section of the membership of the T.G.W.U....'²³⁷ The old militancy of the L.P.U. not only maintained itself in the Transport Union after amalgamation but was strengthened by increasing intensity of work from the late 1920's onwards. London traffic increased by 240% from 1922 to 1930. More importantly, the Combine, once competition from the Independents ceased in the late 1920's could turn its attention to work intensification. The standard bus now carried 60 rather than 34 passengers and the speed limit was increased from 12 m.p.h. to 20 m.p.h. There was a great increase in supervision and the imposition of tighter rules whereas in the old days; '...Red tape in the shape of a whole host of officials chasing and chivvyng the driver and conductor was then non-existent...'²³⁸ The strategy of intensification began at garage level in the late 1920's leading to a rash of garage disputes.²³⁹ Symptomatic was the 'Barking Clock' dispute in October 1929 allegedly over the dangerous siting of a new invention, a time-recording clock,

Transport Trade Unionism

in reality the dispute was over the tightening control of the labour process.²⁴⁰ The early 1930's saw the strategy of intensification pursued at a higher level through scheduling. As the Movement saw it; "...we must use all the means in our power to smash: the scientific pinching of minutes, the scientific exploitation of our labour..."²⁴¹

A second key element in the development of the Rank and File Movement was the political intervention of the Communist Party. In the 1920's, through the agency of the Transport Workers' Minority Movement, the Communist Party focused on the necessity of "...a great clearing out of disloyal and non-dependable leaders and officials in the trade union movement..."²⁴² The General Strike, in which the Communist Party placed undue faith on the left-wing leadership of the General Council, proved this a disastrous strategy²⁴³. By 1929 the Communist Party was advocating independent leadership outside of the union machinery;

"Busman can't fight this scab-providing union by individual action, nor yet by attempting to use branch machinery that is completely under the threat of Bevin. Only by the creation of garage committees, under the leadership of the M.M. and entirely independent of the union apparatus can the London busmen put up a real struggle against speeding-up, supervision that amounts to tyranny and the vast unemployment that will result if Bevin's Transport Nationalisation scheme is unchecked."²⁴⁴

This was the position advocated in papers produced by Communist Party busmen at Holloway, Hackney, Chalk Farm and Battersea.²⁴⁵ Party groups also operated at Shepherds Bush, Willesden, Merton and Dalston. In July 1931 these papers were bought together into the 'Busmen's Punch' edited by George Renshaw, aimed at the whole fleet.

Meanwhile a second group of militants, with some connections with the old rank and file movement, were based around the 'Busman's Wheel' paper. Led by Papworth (Chelverton Road) and Snelling (Merton), they called for 100% unionism and opposition to speed up, rationalisation and the new London Passenger Transport Board.²⁴⁶ The

Transport Trade Unionism

Communists were hostile to this group of '...would-be officials..' claiming that '...the call for 100% membership in the T.& G.W.U. is nothing but a call for 100% company unionism.'²⁴⁷ After a dispute at Cricklewood over the setting up of a rival union, Putney Branch held a mass meeting condemning the officials and circulated other branches calling for the setting up of a rank and file movement. This initiative was attacked by the Communist branch in Holloway garage.²⁴⁸

However it was the actions of the Combine that forced these two groups together. During 1931 there were repeated attacks on wages, conditions and threats of redundancies²⁴⁹. In July 1932 the Combine proposed 800 redundancies and wage cuts which Bevin offered to trade for a speed increase²⁵⁰. In August this agreement was overwhelmingly rejected. Speed represented a shift from attacks on conditions at garage level to an overall company level strategy of intensification. Three days after rejection, Papworth called a meeting at Chelverton Road to set up a 'provisional committee of garage delegates' including William Ware (Enfield) and Bernard Sharkey (Willesden) both Communist Party members, and William Payne (Dalston) and Frank Snelling. By September over half the fifty garages sent delegates who the following month voted to transform the Rank and File Committee into a permanent movement.²⁵¹

The strength of the Rank and File Movement was that it united local militants and linked that garage militancy with an overall strategy. The Movement was run by a system of garage delegates directly paralleling the Central Bus Committee, which was itself a legacy of the old red button union. The Rank and File Committee was remarkably effective in putting forward their case, the first pamphlet "The London Busmen's Case" sold 30,000 copies in the first week, the second pamphlet "Speed" sold 20,000 in the same time. The 'Busmen's Punch', a monthly publication, previously of the Communist Party fraction, now became the Movement's

Transport Trade Unionism

paper, with a regular sale of 8,000²⁵². The paper was similar to the Licensed Vehicle Trades Record in the way in which it encouraged debate about political and industrial issues and published critical letters. The size of the circulation guaranteed that almost every bus worker would see a copy.

The new Rank and File Movement was outflanked over the 'Speed Agreement' when a Central Bus Delegate Conference voted to accept the agreement, they proposed instead to fight the agreement as it was implemented. After a few brief skirmishes, in which seven garages disputed new schedules, the L.G.O.C. decided to enforce those at Forest Gate which affecting one of the heaviest routes in London. The garage came out on strike to be quickly joined by the majority of the fleet together with tube workers at Morden.²⁵³ Despite the unofficial nature of the strike and despite Lord Ashfield's comment that '...in this strike we stand in the same position as the trade union leaders', the strike resulted in the new schedules being withdrawn. The Rank and File Committee had won their first victory. According to Barker and Robbins average schedule speeds on central buses during 'wheel-turning times' from Monday to Friday increased from 9.67 miles per hour in 1927 to 10.24 miles per hour in 1933/4 and to 10.42 miles per hour in 1936/7²⁵⁴. Thus it would appear that the Forest Gate dispute significantly reduced the opportunities for speed-up. This success consolidated the appeal of the Rank and File Committee, acting independently of the officials they had scored a major victory.

Paradoxically, the moment of success was also a display of certain weaknesses in the organisation. As George Renshaw pointed out, there was a delay in establishing 'an authoritative central strike leadership'²⁵⁵. This delay served to isolate certain garages and allowed the officials and the company to confuse and weaken the strike. Had a committee of elected representatives from each garage been set up issuing

Transport Trade Unionism

a daily strike bulletin, then more bus garages and tram depots as well as the underground workers could have been pulled in behind the strike, according to Renshaw. Had this happened, the whole speed agreement could have been destroyed rather than simply delayed and the movement broken out of the limitations imposed by the union machinery inside which it was operating. Instead the movement was gradually sectionalised and isolated, a fact which even the success of winning five out of the six seats on the Central Bus Committee in 1933 and ten out of thirteen London Bus delegates to the Unions Biennial Delegate Conference of that year could not conceal²⁵⁵.

Working from within the lower layers of the union had advantages, as V.L. Allen noted, because the Movement was impossible to prescribe without damaging the Union itself.²⁵⁶ However, it also created several dangers. The Communist Party discovered that the very success of the Movement, resulted in Party members submerging themselves in the Movement rather than carrying Communist politics into the trade unions²⁵⁷. This led directly to the second problem, the 'Achilles Heel' of the movement as Pollitt called it, which was the relationship with other transport workers. Because London central busmen were remarkably militant, the Rank and File Movement could easily grow. On the other hand, this militancy tended to isolate them from other transport workers. In the same way that the Communist Party adapted to the Movement, the Movement now adapted to the bus section. This led to a failure to draw in other sections of transport workers, on the trams, London country buses, the provincial buses, and the underground workers. The third danger, which was to become especially clear in the case of Papworth and Snelling, was the old problem of leadership accountability. By the mid-1930's, the leaders of the rank and file became powerful figures inside the Union in their own right, they themselves began to take a high handed attitude towards garage militancy unless specifically organised by the Movement. Of critical importance, in facing these problems,

Transport Trade Unionism

was the industrial politics of the Communist Party. Unfortunately, the Party having corrected the earlier mistakes associated with the ultra-left period of 1928 to 1932 was now committing the opposite mistakes; accommodation to the patterns of trade union organisation, subordinating party work to trade union work and finally subordinating the industrial struggle to the politics of the popular front. By 1937 the Rank and File Movement found itself leading an official strike, from within the union machinery, for purely sectional demands which isolated the central busmen from both the trams and the provincial busmen.

The first question of strategy and organisation faced by the Movement was the relationship between the bus and tram workers, both now employed by the London Passenger Transport Board. In March 1933, the Rank and File Committee decided that tram branches should be encouraged to affiliate to the Movement to which Hanwell, Fulwell and Stonebridge Park agreed. Tram workers shared the common problem of speed-up.²⁵⁸ There was also the vexed question of Trolley-buses, being introduced in increasing numbers. If these workers were classed as tram workers, they could be used to undermine bus conditions, but since trolleys were more profitable than trams, this could provide an argument for increasing tram wages to the level of bus wages²⁵⁹. The Movement attempted to address the problem by setting up the T.O.T. (Trains, Omnibuses, Trams) Movement. A conference was duly held in July 1934, attended by 31 bus and tram branches and five railway branches.

This attempt to unify transport workers created a number of problems. Firstly, as Clegg comments '...little further was heard of the railwaymen.'²⁶⁰ Secondly, the trolley-bus workers wanted independence and thus favoured withdrawing from the Trams Council (the equivalent of the C.B.C.) and were to set up their own rank and file body, the Western Divisional Trolley Bus Vigilance Committee later that year²⁶¹. Thirdly, the tram workers themselves tended to be

Transport Trade Unionism

ambivalent, not only about rank and file organisation in general, but also over the question of whether they should join the Bus Rank and File Movement or set up their own organisation.²⁶² The proliferation of rank and file committees,, some of which represented more than others, begged the question of the basis for unity. Since tram workers had separate pay and conditions, should the Movement call for one wage structure? Many of the busmen felt that, in the words of one Leyton delegate;

"What has got busmen to their present position is not only the fact that whenever there was a strike call it was always obeyed, it is the fact that with all the pin pricks we receive in the different areas we have various garages standing down for one or even two days, with the result that the Board know we are prepared to fight for any particular thing we want and are demanding. If the tramwaymen are really sincere in what they say, and they stand down for a principle, and stand solid, I don't doubt that the busmen of London would stand down with them, but the lead must be given by our tram brothers themselves."²⁶³

In terms of reacting to 'pinpricks' only three out of thirty five tram depots had taken action in the past two years.²⁶⁴ Yet it was vitally important to the busmen that the tram section should also stand up to Bevin and Clay. It was not simply a matter for the tram workers themselves.

The matter came to a head when Bevin negotiated an agreement which would gradually bring parity for the tram workers. There were two problems. Firstly the the tram section would be unable to make any further wage demands before November 1937. Secondly the proposed increase of 4/- in two stages was still not enough to overcome the wage difference between the bus and tram sections even if the bus section made no wage demands for over two years.²⁶⁵ Despite widespread rejection by branches, Bevin persuaded the Trams Council to agree.²⁶⁶ Without effective rank and file organisation the tram workers were powerless. When Streatham and Clapham came on strike, the 'Justice Committee' appealed for sympathy action, the appeal largely failed.²⁶⁷

Transport Trade Unionism

There were several reasons for failure. Firstly the 'Justice Committee' was not a real rank and file committee but an extension of the Busmen's Rank and File Movement. Instead of fighting the imposed pay settlement through the branches and winning mass support as the busmen had done, they tried to short circuit the process. The difference between the Forest Gate dispute and the strike at Streatham and Clapham is the difference between a rank and file movement and a small pressure group. Although Firminger himself was President of New Cross Depot, the largest in London, with 1,400 workers, the delegates were generally acting without the support of their branches. The attempt to set up a tramway rank and file organisation had all the hallmarks of the Communist interventions of the early 1930's. The 'Justice Committee' was a caricature of the Rank and File Movement. It had all the trappings of the Movement, a committee of delegates, a paper called 'The Lever' (which was only issued after the defeats of the Spring), and the associated general left-wing politics but crucially, unlike the Rank and File Movement, was unable to lead action independently of the officials. The failure of the 'Justice Committee' to turn sympathy into action, and the failure of the Rank and File Movement to organise sympathy strike action, was the result of the Movement's increasing respectability and accommodation to the structures of the union.

The relationship between the Rank and File Movement and the London Passenger Transport Board's country services was equally problematic. Central London buses had the highest wages in the country whilst many of the provincial companies around London did not even recognise the union. The L.P.T.B. took advantage of this disparity to impose relatively poor conditions on London Country and Green Line services. In 1935 the opportunity arose for the Rank and File Movement to intervene.

On July 11th. Romford Garage struck over a schedule

Transport Trade Unionism

dispute, on July 26th. a further dispute broke out at Windsor and Slough Green Line garages. The underlying causes were increased speed, together with threats that anyone caught speeding would be 'severely dealt with', cuts in wages for those who transferred from 'Premier' coach company, and the lack of rest days, especially at weekends.²⁶⁸ By the 28th of July some 3,000 men were on strike and twenty four out of thirty three Green Line garages were closed. Here was a wonderful opportunity for the Movement. As Clegg comments;

"..the strike collapsed on Sunday evening, largely because Messrs. Snelling and Papworth, after a meeting with full-time union officials, went to Slough, not as Central Bus Committee members, for it was outside their province, but as Rank and File representatives, and advised a return to work in order that negotiations might proceed."

Papworth and Snelling subsequently resigned amidst a flood of criticism, only to be reinstated. Part of the reason must be as Glatter suggests;

"...The Movement's own leaders were no longer unknown rank and file members: they were the elected leaders of 25,000 organised workers. Their power among these men was second only to that of the Executive. They mixed with the highest union officials in the course of their union work".²⁶⁹

The result of this curious episode was to isolate the movement permanently from the Country Bus and Coach workers. The Slough debacle was the first sign of a certain lack of direction in the Movement which would become fatal in the greatest opportunity to challenge the union leadership by alliance with the most militant of the provincial bus workers in 1937.

The end of the Movement came with the Coronation bus strike of 1937. One of the founding principles of the Movement had been the fight for a seven hour day. This became translated over a period of nearly two years into a demand for a seven and a half hour day and an easement of work conditions²⁷⁰. Intensification had meant a rising level of accidents and ill-health. A survey of 3,785 men who had

Transport Trade Unionism

left the industry discovered that 1,006 had been discharged through ill-health, 877 had died and only 343 had reached retirement age. Hence the demand for a shorter working day was publicised under the slogan; 'London Busmen Demand the Right to Live a Little Longer!'²⁷¹ This was the first time that the Movement had pursued a claim entirely through official channels and it was a measure of how far the Rank and File leaders were being sucked into the union machinery.²⁷² The C.B.C. were given full plenary powers to run the strike, in return the strike was run on official lines, a complete contrast to the original dispute which founded the Movement.

The strike began on May 1st. 1937 and on the third day a Court of Inquiry was appointed to examine the dispute. The Court, after four days recognised to some degree the justice of the claim over speed and called on the Board to ease schedules. On the claim for a seven and a half hour day, the Court decided that since the claim rested on the detrimental effects of speed on health, a further medical inquiry would be required.¹⁹⁸ Pressure, meanwhile, was growing in the tram section for an all-out strike in support of the same demands. As one resolution put it; '...We realise that we are now being called on to do the work of the central busmen at a lower wage as well as our own.'²⁷³ On May 5th. a full delegate conference of the trams and trolleys voted unanimously for all-out strike action in favour of their own demands and four delegates were sent to wait on Bevin in order to obtain plenary powers for the Trams Council to call such a strike. The Executive Council advised them to await the Court of Inquiry's Interim Report.

After one week on strike, the General Executive Committee of the Union reported to the C.B.C. and delegate conference on the new terms offered by the London Transport. 50 mass meetings were held, at which only three garages; Old Kent Road, Palmers Green and Harrow Weald, voted to return. A further round of voting took place towards the end of the

Transport Trade Unionism

second week and again the same margin was recorded in favour of the strike 15,596 to 1,927²⁷⁴. On the Friday the C.B.C. resolved that the trams and trolley-buses be called into the dispute officially.²⁷⁵ The key issue here was what had taken place at the meeting of the Trams Council Delegate Conference on May 5th. which had unanimously voted for strike action. Yet they could only take action on behalf of their own claim under the agreement of 1936 which still had some six months to run. As Bevin said later; "...the breaking of the agreement would create an impossible situation and make matters worse for busmen in dispute...it was in fact impossible to join the tram and trolley bus members with the claim.." ²⁷⁶ Papworth had no effective answer to this.²⁷⁷

The only way out of the impasse was to cease to operate through official channels, which Papworth suggested in a speech at a demonstration in support of the busmen;

"Any means we can adopt to call out other sections of transport to support us, with the will to win and victory, we shall adopt.

If it means picketing every tram and trolley-bus depot, and every tube station, in addition to the Main Line railways, the London Busmen will undertake that task.

If it means that we have to throw our bodies across the lines of the London tramway system, we shall throw our bodies across, in hundreds and hundreds."²⁷⁸

Despite this speech, at no time did the Movement attempt to approach tram and trolley workers directly, by picketing or any other means. Instead on the 18th. May Papworth and Snelling went to the Trams Council to plead for unofficial action in support of the strike. Yet three tram and trolley depots had already proposed strike action, why did the Movement not organise picketing of these depots? The truth was that the Movement's leaders had become very constitutional.²⁷⁹ The Trams Council refused to contemplate unofficial action.

On May 24th and 25th. the busmen again sat in delegate conference and rejected 40 to 9 any return to work, without putting forward any new strategy. The Union had now spent

Transport Trade Unionism

over £100,000 in strike pay. On May 26th. the Executive revoked the plenary powers of the C.R.C., met with the Board at the Ministry of Labour and agreed terms very similar to those of the Inquiry. The Movement was powerless and on May 28th. there was a full return to work. The Movement was finished.

It was suggested earlier that Bevin deliberately engineered the defeat of the Coronation strike and that this motive was behind the failure of the national officials to act in a decisive way during the provincial strike, even though they knew there was no national agreement to be had. Clegg suggests that this is a possible interpretation.²⁸⁰ However Clegg's explanation is based on the events in London. In the case of the provincial strike, both Bevin and Clay knew that Maidstone and District and the East Kent Road Car Company, had steadfastly refused to recognise the union, despite having between 90-95% union membership amongst their workforce. They also knew that there was no possibility of a national agreement for provincial busmen. The provincial strike could have brought the last non-union companies into line opening the door to a national agreement. The only explanation for their refusal to support the provincial strike lies in their desire to keep the Rank and File Movement isolated, and that desire only makes sense if the ultimate aim of the exercise was to destroy the Movement. Finally when we consider that two crucial meetings took place on the same day, May 5th.; the first where Clay recommended the ending of the provincial strike, and the second where a delegate conference of tram and trolley bus workers were advised to remain at work by the Executive; then it becomes impossible not to conclude that the Clay and Bevin, worked together to destroy the Movement.

The events following the termination of the strike, strongly reinforce this view. On the 29th. May Bevin issued a letter to the London busmen explaining the Executive's version of events. On June 7th. the functions of the Bus

Transport Trade Unionism

Committee, Schedules Sub-Committee, District Committees, Delegate Conference Members, Disciplinary Boards Representatives and Garage Delegates were suspended pending enquiry into the activities of certain members and their connections with unofficial movements. At the July Bi-ennial Conference of the Union, attended by fourteen 'rank and filers', the attempt to refer back the Executive's Report into the strike was defeated by 269 votes to 63. The enquiry into the strike by the Finance and General Purposes Committee issued two reports prepared by Arthur Deakin; the First or Interim Report was presented to the B.D.C. in the form of a declaration against interference in the union by 'outside bodies'. The declaration called for an end to rank and file organisations and any other unconstitutional bodies. Branches having contact with or distributing literature of such bodies would be disciplined. Unofficial meetings to discuss any matter relating to the union would render the members taking part liable to disciplinary action, including expulsion. Finally the circulation of resolutions critical of or hostile to union policy was to cease. Any branch decision resulting from any of the above activities was to be automatically declared void.²⁸¹

This report was endorsed by 291 votes to 51, rank and file organisations had been effectively proscribed for ever. The second phase of the inquiry into Rank and File and Communist Party 'interference' in Scotland, United Counties and the Thames Valley was the expulsion from the Union of Papworth, Payne and Jones. Snelling, who was ill at the time, was later expelled as well. The Busmen's Punch lingered on until finally ceasing in November. However, the Executive did not have things entirely their own way. A new Central Bus Committee resigned after three meetings calling for the return of the 'true leaders of the busmen'. In February 1938, after much discussion, a minority of the movement led by Snelling, Payne and Hayward set up the National Passenger Worker's Union as a rival union. This was disastrous since it forced those who remained into the

Transport Trade Unionism

hands of the T. & G. bureaucracy and dissipated much of the energy of the militants into attacking each other. In response to the continued unrest, the Executive announced in April 1938, to a delegate conference of busmen, that those suspended would be eligible for office at the next elections and that Papworth and Jones would be readmitted, though debarred from office for four years, if they gave certain assurances.

The much discussed national agreement for provincial bus workers only appeared with war time control of wages in 1940. The sporadic revolts continued into 1938.²⁸² The declaration against the Rank and File Movement could not stop these small sparks of revolt. However the chance to force Tillings and B.E.T. into a national agreement in 1937 had been thrown away. In January 1939 the Ministry of Labour persuaded the Companies to discuss an N.J.I.C. with the Union, though nothing resulted. Instead the Union turned to actions under Section 93 of the Road Traffic Act. The effect of these was `...to place practically the whole of the busworkers in Scotland under our agreement on conditions and wages..' reported `The Record' in May 1939. In June the paper again commented on the effects of some 48 cases taken to the Industrial Court;

"A great deal of discontent has been removed without any inconvenience to the public, the spending power of the men has been increased which means more employment for workers in other industries and a great contribution has been made towards placing the regulation of wages and conditions in the bus industry on an orderly basis."

Conclusion

What can be deduced from these fifty years of tram and bus trade unionism? Three distinct phases can be discerned. In the first period from 1889 to the end of the First World

Transport Trade Unionism

War two distinct types of unionism developed, the critical difference between them was the nature of militancy at the time of these unions consolidation. The transformation of the labour process as a result of the shift from competitive to monopoly capitalism took place prior to unionisation on the buses and after unionisation on the trams. This transformation process created only the objective conditions in which militancy could develop, it did not, in itself, create militancy. In the second period, from the later stages of the war through until 1924, one transport union was consolidated within a complex contradictory process. Developing militancy on the one hand and the creation of national negotiating structures on the other, resulted in a highly centralised and bureaucratised union structure which nevertheless allowed for localised militancy. The new union contained elements of both the tram and bus union traditions within it, thus the 1924 London strike was a remarkable display of militancy led from the top of the Union. Finally from the General Strike until 1940, the Union leadership worked to gain complete control over the militant sectionalism of the bus membership, which was continually nurtured by increasing intensification of the labour process which resulted in quite exceptional militancy during years of mass unemployment. Only after this militancy had been contained and defeated could the Union begin to consolidate the bargaining procedures in London Transport and the provincial bus industry along the lines of the N.J.I.C.

In Chapter Three we posed a general question about the relationship between the development of the labour process and labour resistance within the road passenger transport industry. It should now be clear that the objective development of the labour process creates the conditions in which labour resistance can develop. Furthermore labour resistance can restrict and restrain the development of the labour process. There is a dialectical relationship between the two in which the forms, structure and politics of trade

Transport Trade Unionism

unions play a critical mediating role. At this stage it is necessary to complicate the picture still further. These fifty years were also a period in which the state at local and national level played an increasing role in the industry, in terms of ownership, regulation and control. The remainder of this thesis examines the relationship between labour process and labour resistance in an industry which by 1947 came under almost complete state control. How does the period after 1947 contrast with the period before?

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

1. "Radical Aristocrats - London Busworkers from the 1880's to the 1980's" - Ken Fuller, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1985.

2. See "The Liverpool Tramwaymen's Agitation of 1889" Eric L. Taplin, in "Building the Union - Studies in the Growth of the Workers Movement", 1973, Toulouse Press, Liverpool. p. 67.

3. As one Union history explains;
 "...the most spectacular growth [of all the new unions] was achieved by the provincial tramwaymen of the Amalgamated Association."

See "A History of British Trade Unions since 1889" - H. Clegg, A.Fox & A.F.Thompson. Clarendon Press, Oxford 1964 (2cd. Ed.1977) p.84.

4. In 1892 there was only one branch outside Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire which was in Nottingham. The quarterly report of the Amalgamated Union gives the following membership table;

MEMBERSHIP OF THE A.A.T. BY BRANCH 1892.		
BRANCH	MEMBERSHIP	DATE OF FORMATION
Manchester	1400	-
Sheffield	450	August 22cd 1891
Nottingham	200	November 1890
Rochdale	70	August 8th. 1891
Bury	70	November 14th. 1891
Preston	72	December 13th 1891
Rotherham	42	November 7th. 1891
Barnsley	45	November 7th. 1891
Huddersfield	40	December 5th. 1891
Burnley	35	December 6th. 1891
TOTAL	2424	

See AAT Quarterly Report 1892.(February 6th.)

5. Birmingham is actually listed as a branch much earlier than Clegg's date of 1897. The A.A.T's records show a branch in Birmingham in 1894 (See Quarterly Report A.A.T. 30th. Dec. 1894) However Clegg is correct in saying that no significant branch existed until a strike in that year. Then the branch went from 20 members of 1894 to over 1,000. This was not to last because the branch split away from the A.A.T. subsequently.

6. Clegg et al. p.84.

7. For comparison with other 'new unions' see E.J.Hobsbawm - "Labouring Men" - Weidenfeld, London 1964, p.180 in 1977 Edition.

8. The figures for the total of tramwaymen is taken from the Census of Population 1911 (Cmnd.7929) Vol.X. compared with the figures in table three. Why the later year may be an overstatement is that the census 1911 figure is compared to the 1910 membership figure. Whilst the actual figure may be suspect, the trend is unmistakable.

9. Table Ten - Main source. Annual and Quarterly reports of

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

the A.A.T. These are confirmed by reports of the Board of Trade viz. Report by the Chief Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade G.B. Board of Trade. 1902, 1906 and 1909. Other figures * = Clegg, Fox et al. op. cit. See also "A History of Trade Unionism" - Sydney and Beatrice Webb. 2cd. Ed. London 1920. Appendix III.

10. See Clegg, Fox & Thompson. op. cit. pp.88-89.

11. The I.L.P. had ten members on the 70 strong Glasgow Council. The tramway employees, according to the I.L.P. account were paid an average of less than 19 shillings per week for a fourteen hour day. One condition of employment was the deposit of £2 as a guarantee against dishonesty. A system of fines prevailed for reaching their destination too late or too early, for standing too long or not long enough at any point and so on. Further they were expected to maintain a 'respectable appearance' which some of the men failed to do by virtue of their extreme poverty resulting in Magistrates Court appearances for indecency in 1888. Following the demonstration, the Trades Council resolved;

1. That the Town Council be requested to refuse to renew the lease of the Tramway Company; to take over, and work in the interest of the public, the Tramway system of Glasgow; and to refuse to employ Mr. Duncan and the other officials of the company who are responsible for mistreating the men.

2. That deputations be appointed to wait on the retiring Councillors for the purposes of ascertaining their views on the question of Tramway municipalisation, and that those who are found hostile be opposed at the forthcoming election.

See "Glasgow Municipal Enterprise" - J. McConnell - Labour Leader Publications. Glasgow 1898. See pages 56-64, 80-84.

The composition of the 'stalwarts' is interesting. They were; John Ferguson, Publisher; James Shaw Maxwell, Lithographic Artist; George Mitchell, Ironmoulder; P.G. Stewart, Brushmaker; Archibald Hunter, Baker; William Forsyth, Butcher; Patrick O'Hare, Publican; John Battersby, Compositor; James Johnson, Engineer and Dr. James Erskine, Surgeon.

The stalwarts were supported by an organisation; the Glasgow Worker's Municipal Election Committee. The majority were trade union delegates. The composition of this body was;

Thirty four Trade Union branches, two delegates each	...68
Glasgow Trades Council, six delegates6
Seven I.L.P. branches, two delegates each14
District Council, I.L.P.2
Twenty two Co-operative Societies, two delegates each	...44
Three branches Irish National League, two delegates6
Irish Independent League, two delegates2
Social Democratic Federation2
Labour Literature Society2

Total144

12. See A.A.T. Quarterly Report September 1900 pp. 10-11 and also the Board of Trade 'Labour Gazette' Volume VIII, 1900, p. 317 and p. 348.

13. A.A.T. Quarterly Report, September 1900.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

14. Some information is provided in the Board of Trade 'Labour Gazette' Volume IX, 1901 p. 254. It is also interesting to note that according to Bullock, when Ernest Bevin, then a young organiser for the Docker's Union, held a meeting for the tramwaymen nine years later; '...Inspectors were stationed in the doorways along Broad Street to take the names of those attending...' See "The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin" - Volume 1. Alan Bullock, Heinemann, London, 1960 p. 31.

15. "The Rise of a Mass Labour Movement : Growth and Limits" - James Hinton in "A History of British Industrial Relations" Edited by C.J. Wrigley, Harvester Press, Brighton, 1982. p. 31.

16. "The New Unionism and the Labour Process" - Richard Price in "The Development of Trade Unionism in Britain and Germany 1880-1914" - Ed. W.J. Mommsen and Hans-Gerhard Husung - The German Historical Institute - George, Allen & Unwin, London 1985 and also "Labour in British Society" - Croom-Helm, London, 1986.

17. See the Annual Report of the A.A.T. December 1901.

18. See A.A.T. Quarterly Report September 1901 p.7.

19. A.A.T. Annual Report 1902 pp.14-15.

20. In 1903 five London branches were added, London number 2,3,4,5 and 6. In 1904 number 7 and 8 were formed. In 1905 number 9 and Walthamstow. In 1906 East London, Finsbury Park, Finchley, Hackney and Clapton, Hampstead, Highgate, London Central, Stamford Hill and Wood Green - A.A.T. Annual and Quarterly Reports & also Barker & Robbins p. 99.

21. This union was the result of a merger between the older established London Cab Driver's Trade Union and the London Bus, Tram, and Motor Workers Union. See Fuller op. cit. The London Cab Drivers Union was founded in 1894. The membership figures from 1897 to 1907 given in the following table show clearly that it was stagnating until the busmen were recruited.

See Report by the Chief Labour Correspondent of the Board of Trade 1901,1902-4, 1905-7.

The London Bus & Tram Workers appears briefly in the same report for one year only; 1904 where it is reported as having 147 members.

----- TABLE -----

MEMBERSHIP OF THE LONDON CAB DRIVERS UNION.

YEAR	MEMBERSHIP	YEAR	MEMBERSHIP
1897	4,019	1903	3,006
1898	3,656	1904	6,121
1899	4,026	1905	3,468
1900	3,780	1906	2,885
1901	3,136	1907	2,421
1902	3,001		

22. "The New Labour Outlook" - Robert Williams, Leonard Parsons, London, 1921. pp. 8-12.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

23. Undoubtedly the recognition achieved by the railway workers in that year was a shining example. See Clegg op.cit. Volume II p72.

24. From the Select Committee on Motor Traffic 1913 QS7257 and 8689. This point is made by Gordon A. Phillips in an unpublished thesis "The National Transport Workers Federation 1910-1927" D.Phil. Oxford 1969.

25. The A.A.T. was not a union that believed in sympathy strikes and general strikes as a union tactic, see the frequent references in the General Secretary's Report in the Annual Reports and consider also the following table.

----- TABLE -----

A.A.T. EXPENDITURE ON STRIKES/LOCK-OUTS AND BENEFITS
1900-12

YEAR	INCOME	STRIKE PAY	FUNERAL BENEFIT	SICK BENEFIT
1900	£10,885	£590	£842	£4,046
1901	£14,000	£38	£854	£4,375
1902	£13,553	£33	£837	£4,403
1903	£16,276	£476	£755	£7,484
1904	£15,028	£57	£674	£6,586
1905	£15,177	£500	£762	£5,699
1906	£17,301	£1,247	£797	£6,799
1907	£19,241	£270	£858	£7,361
1908	£19,370	£4	£891	£7,637
1909	£20,001	£11	£850	£8,144
1910	£21,147	£9	£876	£7,964
1911	£23,823	£164	£958	£8,609
1912	£24,719	£345	£1,001	£9,726

Strike Pay = Strike/Lock-out and Victimization Pay.
All figures rounded to nearest £.
Source A.A.T. Annual Reports 1900-1912.

The significance of this table is clear, the A.A.T. attached more importance to friendly society type benefits than to disputes. The figures for 1910 to 1912 are during the time of the highest levels of strikes since 1889.

26. The explanation put forward for the decision of busmen to join the A.A.T. by Ken Fuller (op.cit.) centres around the concept of 'Labour Aristocracy' and yet he argues that they were influenced by syndicalism and marxist ideas without specifying what he means. Can workers both be 'craftist' and hold syndicalist ideas on industrial unionism? If they saw themselves as a craft union why did they join a cab drivers union? The lack of militancy of the A.A.T. is certainly a factor. However the A.A.T. was not as weak as implied on page 32, where Fuller states that the A.A.T. had four branches in London in 1914 which covered geographical areas, in fact there were six branches (the four he mentions plus Highgate and South East London) which

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

were geographically based but rooted in individual depots. The combined membership of the branches was London No.1 (1,089), North East (730), South (50), South West (280), Highgate (1,990) and South East (1,028). Total 5,167 which makes it larger than the L.P.U.

Finally, there is the problem of ascribing too much to ownership patterns. According to Fuller a single employer is a source of strength as a union faced with negotiating with several different employers allows them to play one section of the employees off against another (p.28) whereas for Taplin ("The Liverpool Tramwaymen's agitation of 1889" op. cit.) the monopoly enjoyed by Liverpool tramway company conferred upon it immense power for dealing with employee agitation (p.72). Therefore unionism and non-unionism can be explained by monopoly. Neither of these arguments have sufficient explanatory power, what matters is the relative strength of either organisation, which depends not merely on ownership or the absence/presence of competition but a whole series of factors which add to the strength or weakness of either side.

27. See Clegg op.cit. Volume II p.72.

28. The looming of the dispute is referred to in the L.P.U. paper, the Licensed Vehicle Trades Record (LVTR). For example see George Sanders report Sept. 11th. 1913.

29. See Holton's article in "Building the Union" op. cit. p.122. and also "British Syndicalism 1900-1914" - Bob Holton, Pluto Press, London 1976. and Clegg op. cit. pp. 40-1 and 72-4.

30. See Fuller op.cit. p. 33 and chapters two to five.

31. Notes from the General Secretary in a commemorative brochure give the number of permanent paid officials in addition to the Executive as follows; Birmingham 1, Blackburn 2, Bradford 1, Newcastle 1, Leeds 1, London 1, Manchester 3, Nottingham 1, Salford 2, Sheffield 1, Oldham & Rochdale 1. A ratio of one per five hundred members.

32. Thus Fuller quoting from the Amalgamation Report of the L.P.U. issued in 1918 writes;

"We have a shop steward system that devolves responsibility for a particular road. If he is on the 10 road, he collects grievances for that road...Even spare men have their own steward, who will say what the men's conditions are, and how they are treated. They have a right to raise difficulties in the garages. If not satisfactorily dealt with it goes to the District Committee, which meets the Company with the District Organiser." See Fuller p. 34.

33. The Traffic Combine Agreement in 1913 included; The Metropolitan District Railway, The London Electric Railway, The City & South London Railway, The Central London Railway, London United Tramways, The London General Omnibus Company, The Metropolitan Electric Trams and Motor Buses (M.E.T.Co), Southern Motor Buses, Gearless Omnibus Co, Associated Omnibus Co., Central Omnibus Co., Tillings, British Motor Bus Co., and the National Steam Car Co.

34. The 1911 strike was simply a one-day protest strike to

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

coincide with the arrival of George Askwith, the chief conciliator from the Board of Trade. See Board of Trade - Labour Gazette Volume XIX, 1911 p.350 and p.284.

1913 was a 'general' strike of all corporation employees led by the gas-workers. The Tramwaymen were the first to return leading to accusations of betrayal. See 'The Leeds Corporation Strike in 1913' - J.E. Williams, in "Essays in Labour History : 1886 - 1923" - Edited Asa Briggs and John Saville, Macmillan Press, London, 1971. pp. 70 - 95.

35. See Licensed Vehicle Trades Record. Feb 4th. 1914.

36. See A.A.T. Annual Report 1915. p. ix.

37. According to Barrett there was a spontaneous strike in November 1913 over route changes, a dispute at Leyton garage over a victimisation in January 1914, and in March of that year three garages stopped work to call a meeting to air grievances, prompting the complaint from Smith quoted above. See "The Busmen's Punch : Rank and File Organisation and Unofficial Industrial Action Among London Busmen: 1913-1937" - J. Barrett, M. Phil. Warwick, 1974.

38. The spreadover payment was an important concession (Spreadovers are shifts split into several, usually two parts with a long gap in the middle, their purpose is to allow one crew to work through both peak periods of the day) The minimum wage demand was a long standing grievance, the 'mileage' system of payment was a piece rate system like the journey system before it and wages could fluctuate between routes and according to traffic conditions. The failure of the E.C. to force minimum wage issue was criticised in the L.P.U.'s journal, the Licensed Vehicle Trades Record. The report concerned a meeting of Palmers Green branch;

"The Executive Committee had a mandate from the men on The Charter, and it was to be The Charter and nothing but The Charter, and they bought us back these generous concessions and advised us to accept them. Is this the long looked for day of emancipation and freedom from this cursed mileage system? If it is not insulting in advising us to accept the proposals, it is on the verge." See The Licensed Vehicle Trades Record Volume 1, 24, June 10th. 1914.

39. See Licensed Vehicle Trades Record Volume II No.42 Feb 17th page 1. which reported that;

"The men locked out recognise they are not only defending their own right to negotiate collectively with their employers, they are fully alive to the fact that this is an attempt on the part of the National Steam Car Company to smash the Busmen's Charter."

The lock-out lasted until April when new men were employed, over half the old employees had by then obtained other work. For other coverage of dispute see No.41 Feb. 3rd., No.44 March 3rd. and No.47 April 28th.

40. According to a brief history of Clapham Tramway Depot in 'The Record' in 1911 the 'vast majority' of the men were in the A.A.T., the first action they took was over the Coronation where a claim for double pay for the two days was put forward to the L.C.C. through the District Committee, which was conceded. The report goes on;

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

"Then came the great Transport Workers' strike, and we all rightly thought what a fine opportunity is afforded us to press forward our demands for an eight hours day....We held midnight meetings, and the men were all determined for immediate action, till we were advised we must act constitutionally, so we allowed the permanent officials of this Manchester society to handle the situation (at this crisis Mr. Watson went on holiday to Hayling Island for a week-end) ; so instead of forcing the matter while the iron was hot they allowed the powers at Spring Gardens a week's truce to consider (as they were also supposed to be on holiday), who resolved it should go to the Conciliation (Graveyard) Board, which naturally meant that we got nothing except an extra half day journey on the day's work and generally speeding-up all round."

According to the author; '...no less than seventy per cent of the men ceased to be members'. See Licensed Vehicle Trades Record Vol I Sept. 11th. 1913.

41. See 'Open letter to L.C.C. Tram-Men' in Licensed Vehicle Trades Record November 12th 1913. In this it is claimed that '...I was talking to a prominent official of the Manchester Union about eighteen months ago, who said he called round to the men's houses when they were three months in arrears and collected sixpence or a shilling, so as to book them up as members.' The assertion here being that the majority of the A.A.T.'s London membership is signed up on this basis.

42. Appeals for men to leave the A.A.T. and join the L.P.U. are legion in the 'Record', three examples will suffice;

(i) 'An Open Letter to L.C.C. tram-men' - Licensed Vehicle Trades Record November 12th 1913.

(ii) 'To the Tramwaymen of London' - an appeal by Archie Henderson, a former branch officer of the A.A.T. who says... "Let us up and drive them out of London, where we have no room for an underground secret society". This is in response to the 1915 strike debacle. - Licensed Vehicle Trades Record June 23rd. 1915.

(iii) 'I think it is very near time we gave the officials of the A.A.T. and V.W. the hint that we have no room for danglers, but intend to join the fighting union, namely the London & Provincial Union' - Letter to Licensed Vehicle Trades Record November 26th. 1913.

43. Licensed Vehicle Trades Record Volume II No.48 May 12th. 1915; report from Telford Avenue Branch.

44. One important cause of intensification was the growth of the munitions establishments at Enfield Lock and Woolwich, the latter employing 70,000. See Barker & Robbins op.cit. Vol.II p.194-5.

45. This can be contrasted with Manchester, heartland and birthplace of the A.A.T., had achieved no more than the national average wage in an industry that was only half organised. Tramway wages in real and money terms are given in the table below.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

----- TABLE -----

(i) TRAMWAY WAGES IN REAL AND MONEY TERMS

YEAR	JULY 1914	DEC 1915	DEC 1916	DEC 1917
TRAMWAY DRIVERS;				
REAL	100	106.2	118.5	141.1
MONEY	100	78.7	71.8	74.3
TRAMWAY CONDUCTORS;				
REAL	100	107.2	120.5	145.5
MONEY	100	79.4	73.0	76.6

PART (i) deals with wage indices with July 1914. the outbreak of war. as 100.

From Ministry of Labour. Abstract of Statistics 1919-1933 pp.87-8.

----- (ii) TRAMWAY DRIVERS WAGES - LOCAL COMPARISONS -----

DATE	JULY 1914	DEC 1915	DEC 1916	DEC 1917
a) MANCHESTER	31/-	33/-	37/6d.	43/-
b) LONDON C.C.	34/6d.	37/6d.	41/-	46/6d.
c) 52 LARGE TOWNS	30/11d.	32/11d.	36/9d.	43/9d.
d) B AS % C	111.6	113.9	111.6	106.3

PART (ii) with money wages, with (ii)c) as an average of 52 large towns and (ii)d) as a %.

See Board of Trade Labour Gazette. 1914-17.

46. L.C.C. Finances improved during the first year of the war because;

(i) no new cars were received during the war and many buses were withdrawn to France, yet passengers carried increased from 523 million in March 1914 to 636 million the following year. Thus passenger carryings per employee increased.

(ii) Revenue increased, though by how much is uncertain. During the first week in May 1914 L.C.C. tram income was £43,642, whilst in the same week of 1915 it was £50,155 indicating an annual increase of £340,000.

See Licensed Vehicle Trades Record - May 26th. 1915.

47. Licensed Vehicle Trades Record May 26th. 1915. It is significant that Fuller op. cit. omits the first part of the quote which proves that the strike was called by the rank and file and discouraged by the leadership of the L.P.U. Since this argument appears in two consecutive issues of the union journal it is hardly likely to be incorrect. Compare Fuller's account on page 32 of 'Radical Aristocrats'.

48. 'Licensed Vehicle Trades Record' June 9th. 1915 p.4.

49. Ibid.

50. Board of Trade - Labour Gazette Vol XXIII 1915 p.222.

51. A.A.T. Annual Report 1916 p.xi.

52. Eventually this led to a union inquiry into the actions of Mr. Watson, the London Organiser. A sub-committee of the

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Annual Delegate Meeting set up to examine the union's organisation in London, reported in May 1918;

"We find that the branches have had uphill work since the strike of 1915 and have been a little disheartened due to the belief that the Executive Council was not giving them the full measure of support to which they were entitled. Having regard to the presence of a hostile union, whose tactics and methods have not always been prompted by a desire to organise the non-unionists, but rather to discredit the work and the officials of our Association. This has made the work of organising for our members and officials a more difficult task, and has caused in some districts rather a pessimistic view to be taken". See the agenda of the 28th. Annual Delegate Meeting of the A.A.T. held in May 1918 in Birmingham.

53. See Licensed Vehicle Trades Record reports of the inquiry into the actions of Mr. Watson, London Organising Secretary of the A.A.T. on December 8th and 22cd. 1915.

54. Licensed Vehicle Trades Record - November 22cd. 1916.

55. See Fuller op.cit. pp. 38-40 and pp. 47-50. Also Barrett Thesis Chapter One.

56. Licensed Vehicle Trades Record - May 26th. 1915 reports a midnight meeting of tramwaymen at Highgate on Saturday 8th. May where "...Brother Will Mannering (spelt Mainwaring) then gave us a little bit of advice on the principles of trade unionism, but as he was not thoroughly acquainted with the licensed work of London he gave us a little idea of the South Wales miner's trouble. They are demanding a 20% war bonus and are determined to get it, and if it meant starving the Navy to get it, they would hold the coal owners just as responsible as the miners."

Also the Licensed Vehicle Trades Record article on the Shop Stewards Movement.

57. Thus in engineering, rank and file activity focussed on the workshop and the shop stewards, by-passing the formal organisation of union branches covering different factories and fragmented into two hundred different unions with their jealously guarded skill differentials and so on. Thus J.T.Murphy, in 'The Workers Committee' proposed a complete national structure, independent of the official union structure in engineering, as an alternative source of authority to the existing unions, whereas 'The Miner's Next Step' never proposed such a step. This discussion is germane to Zeitlin's critique of 'rank and file' arguments discussed at greater length in Chapter 3. Clearly the question of whether regional committees support and lead 'rank and file' initiatives is partly structured by the relationship between the workplace and the union structure.

58. This point comes essentially from "The Tragedy of A.J.Cook" - Tony Cliff in International Socialism 2:31 Spring 1986.p.76. Whilst it is outside the reference of this thesis more information is available on the South Wales Miners Unofficial Reform Committee in "The Fed - A History of the South Wales Miners in the Twentieth Century" - Hywel Francis & David Smith - Lawrence & Wishart, London 1980

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Chapter 1. For the Shop Stewards Movement see "The First Shop Stewards Movement" - James Hinton - George, Allen & Unwin, London 1973.

59. Had the A.A.T. officials clearly supported the strike, then the joint strike committees at depot level could have generated a model for unofficial action that was between that of the U.R.C. in South Wales and the engineering shop stewards, a rank and file organisation embracing both unions and acting independently of them. Clearly such an event would have horrified the A.A.T. leadership.

60. The N.T.W.F. initially consisted of seventeen unions, mostly port and maritime workers from Merseyside, London and the Bristol Channel. The number of affiliated unions increased to twenty five within twelve months, representing a combined membership of 55,000 in June 1911, 160,000 by August and 220,000 by March 1912. The first problem was the failure of the national leadership to effectively control the successive waves of strike action which tended to be regional in character, centering on Merseyside in 1911 and London in 1912. District Councils were created in 1912 to try to weld an effective organisation together, to consolidate the gains of 1911, to spread the closed shop and to guarantee recognition. The failure of a call for national action in support of London in 1912 ended this first period of rapid growth. See thesis by Gordon A. Phillips. "The National Transport Workers Federation 1910 to 1927" - Oxford D.Phil. 1969 for a detailed periodisation of the labour 'unrest'.

61. Ibid. From the N.T.W.F. Annual General Council Report 1913 p.32.

62. The basis for joint action with the other unions in the Triple Alliance was described in the pages of the 'Record' as follows;

"...a short summary of this constitution may be briefly stated as follows : (1) Matters of a national character or vitally affecting a principle may be submitted to the joint body; (2) co-operation not to be called upon or expected until the matter in dispute has received the endorsement of the National Executives of the organisations concerned; (3) joint action to be taken when two of the three executives have decided in favour of such a course at a meeting specially called; (4) complete autonomy to be reserved for any of the three bodies to take action on their own behalf; (5) no obligation to take joint action unless the forgoing conditions are complied with." (Presidents Notes in the Licensed Vehicle Trades Record December 22cd. 1915.)

63. The dispute broke out on April 29th. 1917. The immediate cause was the sacking of ten busworkers, six men and four women, at Palmers Green for returning their buses to the depot as a protest against the sudden increase in unpaid 'stand time' outside of the agreement. This spontaneous action came at a time when the new executive, a consequence of the Vigilance Committee, had voted to terminate the clause banning sympathy strikes in the L.G.O.C. agreement. The L.G.O.C. had retaliated by removing recognition of the

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

union and subsequently refusing to forward a claim for a ten shilling war bonus to the Board of trade. A delegate conference recommended a strike in support of the ten, for recognition and for the bonus which was endorsed by 5,152 votes to 699. On the 13th. May 8,470 drivers, conductors and inside staff struck and the dispute was settled in six days with reinstatement of the ten dismissed, a review of the 1913 agreement, the withdrawal of the proposed termination of the sympathy strike clause and the forwarding of the war bonus claim. See Fuller op.cit. pp. 42-43. Also Barrett - M.Phil op.cit. Chapter One.

64. Phillips op.cit gives the nine affiliated road transport unions as;

- National Union of Vehicle Workers.
- United Carters (Manchester).
- Liverpool Carters.
- Scottish Horse & Motormen (Dundee)
- Dockers Union
- National Union of Gasworkers.
- Enginemens and Firemen.
- Scottish Horse & Motormen (Glasgow).
- London Licensed Vehicle Workers. (Full name London & Provincial Licensed Vehicle Workers Union - L.P.U.)

And the four main non-affiliates who affiliated during the conference;

- Amalgamated Association of Tramwaymen.
- Amalgamated Carters (Bolton).
- Association of Carters (Leeds)
- Birmingham Gasworkers.

The unions with tramway members being;

- A.A.T.
- L.P.U.
- Gasworkers in Sunderland and Middlesborough
- Dockers Union in Plymouth/Llanelli/Swansea
- Municipal Employees Association
- National Union of Vehicle Workers.

See Philips p.230.

65. George Jackson outlined the A.A.T.'s position;
"It is not altogether the employment of females at a given occupation so much as it is the conditions under which they are employed, and that was not lost sight of when the question was introduced. The danger of employing females in the place of males is mainly a danger of weakening the financial position...In all cases where female conductors are employed,...an agreement has been given that the minimum rate of wages paid to females shall be the minimum rate for a male conductor, and in all cases those conditions are being observed. Then a further condition has been agreed to, which is that male labour shall in no way be penalised through the employment of females, and when male labour can be obtained the females will be dispensed with. (See A.A.T. Annual Report 1915 p.xii.)

The L.P.U. agreed to the employment of women;
"...subject to them doing exactly the same work, and at the same remuneration, and (provided) that their employment

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

should be terminated at the conclusion of the war." (See L.P.U. Annual Report 1916.)

Fuller claims that this position is proof of the 'aristocratic' attitude of the L.P.U., if this were true then the same conclusion would apply to tramworkers. (see Fuller p. 41.) George Saunders also supported this policy demonstrating that sectionalism was not merely a feature of the leadership, but extended to the leading Vigilance Committee members. (See Licensed Vehicle Trade Record December 20th. 1917.)

6. The series red official by the Brighton Hastings Folkestone and Bournemouth and West-Sussex Women's Club works also track the financial of the L.P.U. Executive. Road of Trade Labour Gazette Vol. XXVI. 1915. Also Philip's op cit., Barrett's op cit.

67. The previous we've on has had see three disputes; in London with the Palmes Green incident in Bristol, Bath and Weston-Super-Mare over the existence of an 'em loe' committee as a substitute for the union board. (See Labour Gazette Vol. XXVI. p. 10. 1915). The complaint was about a 'strong' union of the type like B.L.M. in particular liked to set up. Both these were successful, see in Bradford in March, a similar attempt to get women the war bonus failed. Road of Trade Gazette Volume XXVI p. 15. which reports that the four day strike by 1,201 tramway employees went to arbitration which the union lost.

68. A.A.T. report of Annual Delegate Meeting 1918 pp. 68-9.

69. Other amalgamation schemes between the L.P.U. and the National Union of Vehicle Workers in December 1915, and between the A.A.T. and the Municipal Employees Association in 1917 were considered. These had, at various times, been promoted by the Parliamentary Committee of the T.U.C. and the N.T.W.F.

70. As the A.A.T. President's Report in 1917 stated; "It is a question that bristles with difficulties, mainly because members of the different societies are paying different amounts as contributions, and the benefits in each society vary considerably. From our point of view we have got to safeguard the benefits that we have promised to our own members, and the other societies' representatives naturally do the same for theirs." - A.A.T. Annual Report.

71. Despite the fact that the L.P.U. represented the majority of tram workers in London and also had extended tram membership to Bristol in conjunction with the Docker's Union. In 1917, Saunders had successfully organised Imperial Groups tramways; The Bristol Tramway and Carriage Company, and gained over 500 tramway members for the L.P.U. outside London. See Licensed Vehicle Trades Record August 8th., September 5th., September 19th., and October 31st. 1917 for reports of Sanders visits and the successful strike.

72. Thus despite an outburst of rank and file activity in 1917, the Vigilance Committee had met with surprisingly little success in getting their own members onto the E.C. Apart from Sanders and Henderson, whose own reputation would have seen them elected as officials. Thus the Executive

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Committee that replaced the deposed executive forced to '...clear out after physical violence was threatened...' consisted of E. Fairbrother, A.J. Barry, A.N.B. Brooker, J. Somerville, (all taxi drivers) and W.R. Gladley and W.J. Hammond (Bus Conductors) all of whom served on the previous Executive Committee together with G. Bellingham, J. Goodfellow, W. Leavold, R. Jenkin, N. Franklyn and F.J. Fullerton. (All taxi men) How did the Vigilance Committee fail to get anyone on the E.C., leaving it with ten taxi members and two bus conductors both of whom were opposed to the Vigilance Committee? Effectively the bus workers stood too many candidates who took votes off each other and allowed the taxi drivers back in. See the letter in the Licensed Vehicle Trades Record January 31st 1917 from 'Son of Palestine'.

73. Ben Smith proposed the Executive should represent sectional interests, namely;

"The 'Busmen, the Tramwaymen, and the Cabmen, as well as the commercial men, will have separate Councils. Therefore, upon trade or sectional questions, you will develop for the industry a clear channel where nothing can be interpolated by the Executive Council...The matters in which the Trade Sections are concerned will come straight from them to the Executive Council. The Trade Sections will be primarily concerned with the business of their respective groups of members: but for general purposes, they will deal with the affairs of the members as a whole." (L.P.U. Special Delegate Meeting Report 1917 - p.155) Ben Smith quoted G.D.H. Cole in his defence;

"Where employers are closely united and have agreed to present a united front to the workers, the greater rapidity with which the employer can act will usually necessitate the placing of very extensive powers in the hands of the central authority of the Union." (Ibid. p. 156)

It was the Combine, argued Ben Smith, that enforced centralisation on the union. The opponents of this policy, he argued, again quoting Cole;

"...have generally made the mistake of attempting to counter it with indiscriminate denunciations of officialdom and the assertion of the abstract rightness of local autonomy in the barest form. They have often seemed to be asserting the absolute right of every locality or section to do exactly as it chooses, and at the same time to command the support of the union as a whole..." (Ibid. p. 156)

Unless there was sectional representation, argued Ben Smith, 'bureaucratic centralism of the worst sort would result'.

74. Ibid. p.170 and 173. See the whole debate for the officials support for the Vigilance Committee pp.158 - 173. Also the discussion on the 'formation of outside committees', pp. 83 -93.

75. Ibid. p.179.

76. There were a number of problems with the L.C.C. Board, according to delegates. Firstly the A.A.T. had their London Organiser as Secretary, a certain Mr. Watson, who was widely blamed for the defeat of the 1915 strike. Secondly, in the

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

voice of another delegate:

"...the rank and file have no voice as to whom they shall send there; and that brings us back to the argument of yesterday, that all these official positions should be filled by representatives of the rank and file...Perhaps the busmen do not understand the position of the Conciliation Board as well as we do. Our Trade Union Board consists now of six. Two are elected from Belvedere Road, and they are out for anything they can get; but they have to take what is given them, and there is nobody to support them if they want anything else. There are two belonging to the Blue Union {the A.A.T.}, and they are influenced by the officials. They are only pups who go there to do as they are told: and if they are victimised the officials of their society will not back them up. Then it comes down to the point that we have two Red {L.P.U.} members...We have two members to act on our behalf, the Blue Society has two members, and there are the two toadies to squash the lot. The real difficulty is that you have got this Charlie Watson over you with autocratic power, and he is not likely to try and help us while we are trying to get him out." (Ibid. p.180.)

77. As George Sanders explained at the 1919 Conference;

"Your Executive Council, owing to the failure of negotiations for amalgamation, saw fit, towards the end of last year, to appoint four of their number to go North, with a view, not so much as to make members - that was one of the main ideas - but the chief idea was to force the other side to come to amalgamation, and we are laying claim that that has been accomplished, and the Northern Organisers had a lot to do with it." (Report of the 5th. Annual Delegate Meeting of the L.P.U., April 28th. 1919 pp. 13-4.)

New branches had been set up in Newcastle, Chester-Le-Street, Gateshead, Peterborough, Glasgow, Bradford, Wellingborough and Carlisle. (See 1918 Amalgamation Report)

78. 1918 Amalgamation Report.

79. Ibid.

80. Ibid.

81. Fuller op.cit. pp. 54-5. Following Barrett op.cit. p.28.

82. Licensed Vehicle Trades Record. May 28th. 1919. George Sanders was sued by a Mr. John Goddfellow, owing to his customary role of chairing delegate meetings. The account contains a few interesting exchanges;

"Mr. Foote {for defendants questioning Mr. Sanders}: 'You are sued on behalf of the Executive Council. Did you ask to be made defendant?'

{Sanders} : 'No, I never ask to come into the law courts.'
(laughter)

Witness said he was the chairman of the meeting on January 30th. His individual view was that sufficient time had not elapsed for calling the meeting. The statement made in the affidavit on behalf of the defence was signed by him as an official. He agreed with the plaintiff, but he did not agree going to law."

Thus 'going to law' had cost the Rank and File Committee significant support. Further;

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

"Mr. Benjamin Smith, Organising secretary of the Union, stated that persons against the Whitley scheme were arguing from a revolutionary standpoint rather than from LAW and ORDER.

It was reported that irreparable harm would be done to the union unless it joined in the scheme...
Cross examined...

'Did you read in the journal that Brighton did not know of the meeting?'

{Smith}: 'I never read the journal.'

'You never read the official journal of the union?'

'No!'. "

83. The Tramway Unions claim was for a 44 hour week, with a maximum spreadover (that is the time between starting and finishing work) of 9 hours together with the equalisation of overtime rates and the institution of paid annual holidays. The negotiations broke down in March 1919 with the employers offering an average of 48 hours per week and no guarantees that those currently working more than 54 hours would receive the same pay for 48 hours, further there were no concessions on split shifts which would have had to be abandoned in order to keep the maximum spreadover to 9 hours. National Transport Worker's Federation, Annual General Council Report pp.32-39. See also G.A. Phillips "The National Transport Worker's Federation" D. Phil Thesis, Oxford 1969. Chapter IX.

84. A five day strike of 3,000 tramwaymen in Liverpool attempted to force the payment at the rate of 60 hours instead of 57 hours for their 48 hour week. The Ministry of Labour Gazette claims the strike was '...resumed on the employers terms..' (September 1920 p. 388.) Whilst in Sheffield 2,300 struck for six days to demand a 12/- increase in pay and time and a half on Sundays. The Gazette states; 'Work resumed pending national settlement..' (October p. 439.)

85. "The Development of Industrial Relations in Britain 1911-1939" - Rodger Charles, Hutchinson, London 1973. p.171.

86. In February 1920 the N.J.I.C. received a wage claim for 44 shillings a week, which in general represented a ten shillings increase. The employers offered four shillings. The Ministry of Transport intervened by offering to allow sizeable fare increases to cover increased wages. The U.V.W. responded by issuing strike notices for the 27th. March. On the 30th. March the employers raised the offer to six shillings per week which the U.V.W. accepted. However it proved impossible to institute a blanket award, firstly because the North West District Council had already conceded the full ten shillings before negotiations began, and the Manchester branches had already notified the Executive Council that less was unacceptable.

87. See Ministry of Labour Gazette May 1920.p.265.

88. By June, most large tramway companies had conceded a further two to four shillings above N.J.I.C. rates, whilst tramway wages in Wales and parts of Scotland fell behind the Lancashire Area by between two and three shillings. Five out

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

of the nine District Councils had established differential rates of pay according to the size and the financial position of the company. (Phillips. op.cit. Chapter IX.) In 1920 average weekly wages in the tramway industry reached their highest level, just below 74/- for drivers and 70/7d. for conductors, but in real terms wages had fallen by 10% since 1914. The Ministry of Labour Gazette suggests that taking 1914 as 100, in 1918 Tramway Driver's wages were 196.2 and Conductor's wages 207.2;; in 1919 208.9 and 222.0; and in 1920 328.4 and 255.1. In real terms (1914 = 100) in 1918 Driver's wages 89.2 and conductor's 94.2; in 1919 92.8 and 98.7; and in 1920 89.9 and 96.3.

89. In 1920 in Bristol, 1,080 went on strike over a notice forbidding men to enter public houses whilst in uniform and smoking at the end of the journey. The notice was withdrawn. (See Ministry of Labour Gazette, 1920. p 512.) In Newcastle 1,072 employees including Inspectors and Timekeepers as well as crews went on strike refusing to work with Inspectors and Timekeepers in a different union. The result: 'work resumed and matter referred to two executives of unions' (Ibid. p. 571) Finally in Edinburgh 695 pointsmen, fitters and crews went on strike over the dismissal of three men who refused to carry standing passengers. The men remained dismissed. (Ibid. p. 690)

90. The 1919 agreement with the L.G.O.C., Thomas Tilling National Steam Car Company, and the B.A.T. Co. was restricted by the provincial companies to London. The agreement reduced the working week to 48 hours with three hours allowed for signing on, paying in etc. Spreadovers were limited to ten hours, the minimum meal break increased from 20 minutes to 40 minutes and the hated mileage payment system finally abolished. Spares (that is staff not assigned to any particular roster) were guaranteed a 42 hour week and pay was increased to 90 shillings per week for drivers and 78 shillings for conductors. This agreement, especially the clauses limiting spreadovers and guaranteeing a minimum week for spares, was by far the best ever achieved and the conditions clauses were not improved for twenty five years. Other events in 1919 were clearly responsible for this generous settlement, although the fact that the chief negotiator, Mr. Blain of the L.G.O.C., probably wished to avoid calling in Albert Stanley, who was at this time President of the Board of Trade (since 1916), should not be overlooked. Stanley got his old job back in 1919. See Barker and Robbins op.cit. p.200.

At the same time employees at Tillings in Brighton, the East Kent Road Car Company (Tillings) at Folkstone and Tonbridge Wells were trying to get the same conditions as the London Bus agreement. The position of Sanders, the National Organising Secretary for the Omnibus Section was that locally agreed basic rates should stand but that the '...ten shillings increase is of a national character and therefore our Brighton members will get same..' (U.V.W. Annual Delegate Meeting Report. 1920. pp. 48-9.)

91. See United Vehicle Workers Annual Delegate Meeting

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Report 1920, the Report of E.C. Meetings. pp.38-45. On the L.G.O.C.'s own figures the number of motor buses operating in July 1914 was 2,884 and in March 1920 was 2,279.

92. The agreement allowed one quarter of all duties to be extended up to twelve hours, provided that the average spreadover remained nine hours, in return the L.G.O.C. would retain the 500 men for a further three months on a minimum week of 24 hours plus the war wage, (A minimum of 62 shillings for drivers and 56 shillings for conductors) subject to a review in three months time.

93. See General Secretary Report in 1920 Report.p.vi.

94. Before this, another event which showed how different the new union was to the old L.P.U. occurred. The first meeting of the new Executive Committee was picketed by a number of busmen to complain of the election of a certain Mr. Plant who had been allowed to stand for the election to the E.C. despite failing to achieve the nomination from several garages. The new General Secretary, Stanley Hirst, called the police. As one conference resolution put it;

"This Annual Delegate Meeting demands to know why the General Secretary, Stanley Hirst, sent for the police, when a deputation arrived at Emperor's Gate [the union head office of both the L.P.U. and U.V.W.] on the 27th. January 1920...seeing that 45 Emperor's Gate is the property of the members and therefore they are not trespassers." (See U.V.W. Annual Delegate Meeting Report 1920 p. 79.)

Prior to this there were frequent delegations to Emperors Gate. Indeed during the debate about election of officials in the 1917 S.D.M. of the L.P.U., one allegation that Saunders had made of Ben Smith was that he had refused to see a delegation until they had `...cooled their heels...` Smith's reply was that the delegation had been singing `The Red Flag` and threatening `...to throw him out of the window!...`

95. Gen. Sec. Report in U.V.W.'s 1920 Report pp. 32-3.

96. At the Conference George Sanders gave an idea of the sort of things that were happening in Kent;

"The Motor Bus Company have flouted this union for some time, because only one of their branches was in the union, but since the others have joined I have made repeated application for better conditions. We got Herne Bay in, but we could not get Deal. The East Kent Road Car Company has been setting this union at defiance for some time, and we got the employees out almost to a man. Herne Bay came out, but Margate were frightened and went back in a body. Herne Bay and Folkstone were solid, and the buses are now being run on the streets by blackleg labour. A bus company could not beat this organisation and now the Ministry of Labour are on the job."

The reference to the Ministry of Labour concerns negotiations organised by them without involving the union at which the claim was settled for one quarter of the original claim. The suggestion is that the men were intimidated by their employers. U.V.W. Annual Delegate Meeting Report 1920 pp. 52-3.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

97. Ibid p. 70.

98. Cliff quoted from a Rank and File circular attacking N.J.I.C.'s;

"...It is a Government scheme, the result of which is to keep down the wages of the higher paid districts...; I have spent some little time on this clause and I have failed to fathom out what it means...I do not want to read the rank and filthy things issued by the Refuse and Filth Committee." Ibid p. 81.

99. Ibid p. 84.

100. Ibid p. 83

101. Ibid p. 90.

102. Ibid p. 91.

103. Ibid p. 90.

104. Ibid p. 90.

105. Ibid p. 92.

106. Ibid p. 85.

107. See Phillips Thesis op.cit. Chapter IX.

108. T.G.W.U. 'Record' January 1972. The poster was printed to mark the 50th. anniversary of the foundation of the Union.

109. Bullock relates events;

"The findings of the Court, however, were very different from the 16 shillings a day and the endorsement of the principle of maintainance that Bevin had been able to secure for the dockers the year before. In place of the twelve shillings a week increase for which Bevin argued, the Court awarded no advance at all and even its recommendation that existing wages be stabilised until the end of 1921 was successfully contested by the employers. Before the year was out the tramwaymen had accepted a sliding scale varying with the cost of living, a formula which Bevin had rejected with scorn at the Shaw Inquiry." Bullock op. cit. Vol. 1. p.116.

110. Bevin stated afterwards in the Daily Herald;
'...Deliberately and after cool thought and calm reflection, I say it is a period of artificial unemployment bought about by the machinations of the capitalist classes to reduce our standard of life.' 'Daily Herald' - 28th. January 1922.

111. Sanders attitude to the amalgamation was clear;
"I want to state quite frankly that I should have been much more enamoured of the scheme that is now in front of the members had the National Union of Railwaymen and the Associated Locomotive and Firemen's Union been included in the list of unions for the proposed amalgamation...It appears to me that an amalgamation of transport unions is not complete without these two bodies... One more point ought to have the careful consideration of our members before voting, and that is that the officials of some of the unions that we are asked to amalgamate with went over to the side of the capitalist class while the late war was in progress... we ought to be sure that whatever fighting power we possess will not be deadened by close alliance with bodies which would stultify our efforts towards emancipation." Quoted in Fuller pp. 65-6.

112. "The Post-War History of the British Working Class" -

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Allen Hutt, Victor Gollancz, London, 1937. p. 62.

113. At Sunderland the employers tried to enforce a reduction of thirteen shillings a week and threatened to replace the whole workforce during the ensuing eight week strike in Spring 1922. In Newcastle there was an attempt to increase the working week above the N.J.I.C. agreement in April resulting in a four week strike and in Colwyn Bay there was a six week strike over wage reductions greater than the N.J.I.C. rates. 'The Record' (T. & G.) April 1922.

114. Tables from Ministry of Labour Gazette.

----- TABLE -----

MONEY WAGES (AVERAGE) AND INDICES OF REAL AND MONEY WAGES FOR TRAMWAY WORKERS : 1918 - 1923						
YEAR	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
Tram Drivers	-	64/9	73/11	69/-	60/1	58/11
Average Weekly Wages in shillings and pence.						
Conductors	-	61/5	70/7	65/7	56/10	55/7
YEAR	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923
Tram Drivers	196.2	208.9	328.4	222.6	193.8	190.1
Indices of Money Wages 1914 = 100						
Conductors	207.2	222.0	255.1	237.0	205.4	200.9
Tram Drivers	89.2	92.8	89.9	115.9	108.9	107.4
Indices of Real Wages 1914 = 100						
Conductors	94.2	98.7	96.3	123.4	115.4	113.5

115. 'The Record' (T. & G.) January 1922.

116. The three garages were Nunhead, Merton and Old Kent Road. See the U.V.W. Conference Report 1921 p.44., Fuller p.58 and also Barrett Thesis pp.30-1.

117. R.I.L.U. aimed to win trade unions in Britain away from support of the Amsterdam International. At the May 1921 Conference called by the London District Committee of R.I.L.U.'s British Bureau were some 217 trade union delegates; 78 from the Amalgamated Engineering Union, 24 from the Electrical Trades Union, 15 from the U.V.W. ("Communism and the British Trade Unions" - Roderick Martin, Oxford University Press, 1969. p.21.) The U.V.W. delegates apparently gave leaflets out at tram depots urging 'keep an eye on your officials and handle them when necessary'. See Barrett Thesis Chapter Two.

118. These articles were written by A.W. Hickson and F.W. Johnson both of whom were later associated with the Transport Workers Minority Movement. U.V.W. 'Record' Vol. 2. No.48. May 11th. 1921.

119. The front page of the last issue stated; '...up to

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Monday 27th. June we were not aware ourselves how near the Record was to its end. U.V.W. 'Record' - Volume 2, No. 52, July 6th, 1921.

120. According to Fuller a circular sent out by Bevin, Gosling and Ben Smith (Sanders was at this time in hospital after a motorcycle accident) noted, '...the amount of discontent prevalent in the ranks of the omnibus workers...' and that there had been '...threats of secession by one or two branches..' Fuller op.cit. p.67.

121. Bullock op.cit. p.192.

122. The 1921 agreement contained a clause against systematic overtime working, yet both Palmers Green and Battersea Garages were forcing crews to work seven day weeks.

123. Thus Adams from Battersea;

"..one of the greivances was the question of the officials, the high salaries they received, and the expenses they drew, which were sometimes more than their salaries. The busmen themselves had no control over the officials, and what was needed was rank and file officials with rank and file control."

And Warne from Croydon;

"...stronger men would carry out the mandate of the men and not be swayed by this section or that. If Croydon failed to get satisfaction they would have to say: we are sorry, but we must adopt our own methods, just as we did when the union was a red union."

See Fuller pp. 68-71 from the Minutes of the Andertons Hotel Conference.

124. see "Labour Relations in London Transport" H. Clegg, Blackwell, Oxford, 1950. p. 15. The principle of election of National Trade Group Secretaries. According to Bevin's biographer, the concessions were made reluctantly because; "...Bevin realised only too well that if he gave way on too many occasions he would undermine the already precarious unity of the new union." Bullock p.193.

125. The wage cuts 2 shillings per week for drivers and 6d. for conductors were rejected overwhelmingly in a ballot by 8,803 to 1,501. A second proposal met with the same response and was followed by a mass meeting in the Albert Hall addressed by Bevin. According to 'The Record';

"Regarded as a meeting, the rally was not a success. The great majority of the men had come to the meeting for the purpose of hearing a report of the negotiations, but were prevented from doing so by a small minority of the men who were plainly bent on disruptive tactics, and were clearly out to spoil the meeting." 'The Record' (T. & G.) - March 1923.

126. Thus in March 1923 there was a strike at Croydon, Dalston and Maidstone. (see Barrett) In October Croydon struck again over '..delay in receipt of new time schedule involving immediate application of new spreadover deal' and in February 1924 Dalston struck again along with two other garages over a transfer scheme to which officials had agreed. Ministry of Labour Gazette. 1923 p. 414.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

127. The top rate for a bus driver was 86/6d. whilst the top rate for a tram driver was only 67/- and took longer to reach.

128. Figures for the workforce vary slightly; Bullock puts the total at 22,000, Clegg (1985) and Fuller at 23,000. The Ministry of Labour Gazette at 16,200 tramworkers and 22,500 bus workers. 1924 Volume XXXII p.136.

129. Bullock op.cit. pp.239-40.

130. Hobson in the I.L.P.'s newspaper 'New Leader', accused Bevin of sectionalism. The 'Record' replied; "We are all too aware of the government's difficulties and desire as much as anyone to assist in the success of Britain's first Labour Government. A policy of Industrial Truce, would in our view, even if it were possible, not be in the best interests of the Government. There is work to do on the industrial field as well as the political arena.." ('The Record' April 1924.) In Clegg's view, Bevin's intransigence was because;

"At that stage of his life he had little liking for politicians, and was unlikely to be deterred by the embarrassment he was causing them. Indeed he was always a bully, and may have taken pleasure in the prospect. Despite his eminence as a trade union leader, he was not yet wholly accepted as a member of the 'club' by other leaders: and in any case took his own decisions. He was therefore unlikely to be held back by their disapproval." Clegg (1985) p.372.

131. Bullock op.cit. p.241.

132. Sidney Webb is most candid about how the first Labour Cabinet viewed the strike;

"Whether in labour disputes involving grave public consequences, or in cases of mob disorder, or with regard to the constant agitation of the Communist Party, or in relation to threatened rebelliousness among the 'Clyde Group', or those whom Lansbury influenced, or the London Labour Party under Herbert Morrison, the Cabinet never flinched and never hesitated in taking the action that the situation seemed to demand..." (Sidney Webb "The First Labour Government" in 'Political Quarterly' No. 32. March. 1961. pp. 22-3.)

Morrison was merely attempting to promote municipal control of London's transport as a solution against which the Cabinet 'never flinched'. Bevin, however, was not prepared to use the strike to promote municipalisation by acting together with Morrison. The Government acted swiftly to prevent the escalation of the strike as Sidney Webb recalled;

"Without hesitation and without a dissentient voice, the Cabinet set up again the emergency organisation which had been sketched out in 1919-20; put a subordinate Minister in charge of each geographical province; had a committee under Wedgewood sitting daily at the Home Office to organise emergency supplies of food and transport; and sent two Ministers hastily down to Knowsley, where the King happened to be, in order to get signed immediately a proclamation putting in force the Emergency Powers Act which made the

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Executive supreme; and actually arranged with Lord Chelmsford to bring up 800 naval stokers to keep the power stations going (as it was afterwards discovered going even beyond the law...) (Webb *ibid.* p.23)

As Miliband commented;

'There was surely something very symbolic about the proclamation being signed in the residence of a former Conservative Minister, who was also one of the richest men in England.' "Parliamentary Socialism" - R. Miliband, Merlin Press, London, 1975 p.110.

133. 'The Record' January 1925.

134. See Tony Corfield in 'The Record' November 1963 and Fuller *op.cit.* p.79.

135. Thus the C.B.C. proposed a claim including the abolition of spreadovers, a 'closed shop', abolition of voluntary rest-day working and the regular rotation of rest-days and a new rate of 92/- for drivers and conductors (an increase of 5/6d. & 12/6d. respectively). The G.E.C. refused to sanction the termination of the agreement on the basis that it would be inconsistent with the bargaining position taken in the case of the trams which was to reduce the differential between tram and bus wages. The Bus Committee decided that they were;

"...the competent body to decide the terms of the application and the terms of the agreement. They desired to enter a strong protest against the actions of the officials and the E.C. in not tendering the requisite notices to the company terminating the agreement." (Fuller p. 80)

The G.E.C. stood fast and refused to terminate the agreement instead proposing to attempt to improve scheduling and to stabilize wages, at which point the Bus Committee resigned en bloc. As Bullock states; '...Bevin used all his influence to prevent the militant leaders of the London Busmen from staging another hold-up of London's traffic.' (Bullock p. 246)

The negotiations dragged on into 1925, and resulted in a stabilization of wages and a set of agreements over schedules which bought 75% within a nine hour spreadover and a further 15% within ten hours, meaning that 90% of all schedules were within the terms of the historic 1919 agreement.

136. This is not to suggest that there were no more attempts to form breakaway unions. There certainly were in 1929, the late 1930's and the late 1940's. However, these were opposed by the majority of militants. See for example the Thesis by Nina Fishman.

137. On January 1st. 1925 nine garages threatened a strike over schedules for that day however the strike was averted by increased payments. This dispute may well have been co-ordinated by the Minority Movement which was set up the previous August by the Communist Party and who it seems had supporters at Holloway Garage. On 10th. January Seven Kings and Ilford garages struck over schedules which did not allow enough time for meals, on the 21st. January Plumstead and Sidcup garages struck over the transfer issue for two days,

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

and in July Hounslow garage struck over the 'arrogant attitude' of a foreman. See Barrett Thesis, Chapter Two. Also Ministry of Labour Gazette 1925 Volume XXXIII p.63. 138. The table below is derived from the Census by Munby & Watson.

----- TABLE -----

EMPLOYMENT IN THE ROAD PASSENGER TRANSPORT INDUSTRY INCLUDING UNEMPLOYED FROM 1901 TO 1931.			
CENSUS YEAR	TRAMS	OMNIBUSES	MOTOR COACHES
1901	21,333	12,310	-
1911	48,643	11,386	-
1921	88,386	30,480	-
1931	84,448	130,905	8,856

One especially notable aspect of this table is that the decline in tramways in the 1920's that Barker and Robbins and others refer to actually takes place at the end of the 1920's and in the 1930's.

139. See T. & G. Annual Reports 1922 - 1930.

140. In 1922, for example there were two strikes mentioned in 'The Record'. In Brighton, Tillings who had withdrawn from a Trade Union agreement restored the status quo after a one day strike by busmen. At Watford the National Omnibus and Transport Company refused an agreement with the union over hours, pay and conditions, leading to a nine week strike and according to the Annual Report;

"...during this strike...a new departure was made, a competitive service of omnibuses which proved very effective

..the attack on the employers had a very material effect on our being able to secure with the company by which we secured a major portion of the demands of our members."

However it is clear from 'The Record' that it took some time for the men to be 'reabsorbed according to the terms of the agreement'. (T. & G. Annual Report 1922 p. xxxv.)

141. 'The Record' (T. & G.) - December 1922.

142. T. & G. Annual Report 1923 p. xxii.

143. For example in 1923 bus workers trying to unionise the Thames Valley Company at Maidenhead, Reading and Uxbridge were sacked.

144. Ibid. p. xxii.

145. The reality was more complex. The strike, decided by only a minority of members failed to get support from the rest of the workforce. The union was largely a result of Sanders efforts, yet the defeat was blamed for wrecking '...years of patient effort..' by Cliff as follows;

"...there was considerable difficulty between the members and the company, and your Council was handling the matter through its officers in a satisfactory way when two meetings were held and a decision to take strike action was decided upon. The two meetings were attended by approximately 400

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

out of a total membership of 1,500. We were not aware of this decision until the strike had taken place. The company proceeded to run a skeleton service, intimating that the places of the workers would be immediately filled. On the second day of the strike, a large majority returned to work, leaving about 170 victimised. The strike smashed the local organisation, which had only been built up after years of patient effort. The strike took place in spite of official warnings; a section of the men led in such a way as played right into the hands of the employers. After the disaster had occurred, those who had taken a prominent part in permitting the strike admitted quite frankly it was what they termed 'a rank and file movement' and that they had persistently and of set policy, disregarded the advice by the officials of the organisation." (T. & G. Annual Report p. xxii.)

Tony Corfield records the incident as follows;

"In Bristol a tramway worker's strike in 1923 was not only broken but the union branch smashed into the bargain. This strike was, incidentally, the first occasion on which the union was troubled by the "Rank and File Movement" in road passenger transport, which temporarily won control in Bristol and took the management of negotiations out of official union hands. The "Rank and File Movement" was organised by the extreme left-wing with the intention of winning over the trade unions for militant action and of capturing them from within." ('The Record' March 1962)

In both quotes there is a clear denunciation of extremist militancy. Corfield is particularly vague about this "Rank and File Movement", which is not surprising since there was more than one movement. Rank and File Movements have existed since 1916. Both Cliff and Corfield ignore the fact that Bristol branch was organised by a leader of a "Rank and File Group" in the first place. Secondly the incident is used to demonstrate what happens when control is taken from the officials, yet nearly every strike in this period was out of the hands of the officials. The real value of the "Rank and File Movement" to Corfield and Cliff was that it allowed them to explain away a serious defeat. Neither question why the "Rank and File Movement", (if in this case we are really talking about a movement, or simply a group of militants), arose in the first place. Large numbers of union members, even if a minority of the workforce, have to have a reason for ignoring the officials. The most likely explanation is that they were failing to defend conditions adequately. This whole incident is very instructive.

146. See 'The Record' for the whole of 1925.

147. 'The Record' - March 1925. This also gives some examples of the interest shown by municipal operators in bus operation. In March 1925 Leeds Corporation considered the replacement of trams with buses. They visited Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Hull and Sheffield. The Tramways Committee resolved;

"..this committee is..of the opinion that for mass transportation, the tramway must remain the chief means of

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

street transit, and recognising that the motor bus has proved and will continue to be a valuable auxiliary to tramways, proposed to make the fullest use of this type of transport both as feeders for trams and for the purposes of developing new routes."

148. Clay had joined the A.A.T. in Leeds, become branch committee member then President. In 1913 he followed Cliff as full time official for Leeds and District, and again replaced Cliff as Secretary of the Yorkshire District Council. He was also a member of the I.L.P. and a member of Leeds City Council.

149. Thus at the East Ham and Atlas Bus Company, a five day strike in January 1926 secured union recognition and a wages agreement as did a strike at Corby Motors Ltd. of Lancaster in March. The Britannia Omnibus Company conceded an increase in wages after a short strike and the East Surrey Traction Company was forced into an agreement over compensation for transfers. In Weymouth, the threat of strike action caused the National Omnibus and Transport Company to withdraw wage cuts.

150. The following sources have been consulted;

"A Workers History of the General Strike" - R.W. Postgate, Ellen Wilkinson, J.F. Horrabin. - Plebs League, London 1927.

"The General Strike : The Politics of Industrial Conflict" - Gordon A. Phillips. London 1976.

"The General Strike" - J. Symons. London 1957.

"The General Strike 1926" - J. Skelley Ed., London 1976.

"Marxism and Trade Union Struggle - The General Strike of 1926" - T. Cliff and D. Gluckstein. Bookmarks, London 1986.

"The General Strike" - C. Farman, London 1974.

"The History of the Communist Party of Great Britain - Volume 2 The General Strike 1925-6." - J. Klugmann, Lawrence & Wishart, London. 1969.

"The General Strike on Merseyside" by D.E. Baines and R. Beane - in "Liverpool and Merseyside - Essays in the economic and Social History of the Port and its Hinterland" - Ed. J.R. Harris, Frank Cass & Co. Ltd. London, 1969.

151. Phillips pp.212-3. John Hibbs claims that;

"..the impact of the General Strike of 1926 was limited outside the capital, and it was in London that most of the incidents of the strike took place." (1968 p. 168) This is not correct. Hibbs does acknowledge the lack of documentation (p.149) which has improved since 1968.

152. Farman op.cit. p.151.

153. Ibid. p. 151.

154. See Phillips (1976) p. 333 footnote 34.

155. Of these buses between 400 and 550 were independents, and not all of these were operated by regular crews as Symons account includes details of an OMS (Organisation of Maintenance and Supply, the government strike breaking organisation) student volunteer driving an Atlas bus. Several of the independents were unionised and their crews joined the strike.

For the L.G.O.C. fleet, some 600 of the older 'B' types were moved to Regents Park to be operated by students. Again

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

it is doubtful if these provided any more than a token service in the West End.

137. Hibbs, quoting from Modern Transport suggests that the Independents activities during the strike won them;

"...a large measure of public sympathy at a critical period in their own affairs, and it is therefore, not surprising that the government should have decided to allow the cases for the retention of their services on specified routes to be reconsidered by the London Traffic Committee."

This is simply more of the mythology that Hibbs attaches to the Independents and does not bear too close examination!

See Hibbs (1968) p.94. and also Barker & Robbins op.cit. p.322. Symons op.cit. p. 62.

157. Hibbs (1968) p. 95.

158. Symons op.cit. p. 62.

159. Ibid. p. 72.

160. Symon's writes;

"There was a sizeable crowd of drivers and conductors grouped round the garage entrance, opposite it, on the pavements and along the road for some 500 yards going West. At longish intervals a bus would emerge from the garage...At the gates a policeman with a very solemn expression, would climb up beside the driver and the vehicle would slowly turn into Uxbridge Road, sporadic cheers arising from the uniformed drivers and conductors. At about 50 yards distance from the garage the bus would stop. The policeman would alight, and walk back to the garage. At once three uniformed men boarded the bus, one either side of the driver, and one onto the bonnet. There was a short struggle, some high-voiced shouting of threats or insults, and a dishevelled driver dropped on the pavement. The bonnet of the bus was lifted, some vital part removed, labelled with a piece of paper containing a serial number, and placed beside a row of some 15 or 20 other such parts, under a sort of picket guard of uniformed men." Ibid pp.73-4.

161. See Skelley Ed. op.cit. p.273.

162. As Jack Dash recalls;

"All eyes were turned in one direction. Coming in from the direction of Westminster were car loads of special reserves, all steel helmeted with truncheons at the ready, the trucks were protected with a kind of wire cage over the top to protect them from missiles aimed by the strikers. They were followed by mounted police, escorting a General omnibus with passengers, driven by a university student. Stones began to rain down from the tops of the adjacent tenement buildings...The mounted reserves and police were unseated from their horses. Running fights took place with the foot police. The bus was halted, the passengers were dragged out, a great crowd of men overturned the vehicle which caught fire and began to blaze away. There were casualties everywhere. Eventually reinforcements arrived and the police, Special Constables and the Army reserve men gained control. Skelley p.274 and Farman op.cit. p.151.

163. As Postgate writes;

"No blackleg bus driver dared go east of Aldgate [The

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

- Eastern approach to the City of London], and even those who circulated round the safe districts of the West End needed a policeman and one or two specials to protect them". Postgate op.cit. p.52.
164. Farman p. 190 and Phillips p. 333.
165. Bill Jones, a central figure in later years in the union, in an interview with Ken Fuller recalls;
"Blacklegs rode with police escorts including the man who later became Operating Manager, the bastard. He was an undergraduate. The blacklegs were in the main students. Of course we turned the bastards over when we could - turfed 'em off when the police weren't around. I lived at that time just off Kingsland Road and we used to turn 'em off like nobodies business down there. Because they didn't all have policemen riding with them - there weren't enough policemen for that. And if they didn't have policemen that was their lot! One of the lads would get on the bus and drive it anywhere - any side turning out of the way - so it would sometimes take them an hour to find the bus." Fuller op.cit. quote on page 87 from 'Busworker Monthly' 1983 May.
166. Farman pp. 231-2. Also Mowatt and Renshaw.
167. Cliff and Gluckstein p.208.
168. Ibid. p.205.
169. Postgate p.201.
170. According to Skelley (p. 219.)
"...contingents of the Staffordshire and Birmingham police with reinforcements of special constabulary released seven Midland Red buses from Bearwood Garage, in an attempt to run a skeleton service between Quinton and Birmingham. The buses were immobilized, however by strikers in Broad Street, who deflated their tyres."
171. Ibid p.221.
172. Ibid p.224. 1926 was seen by one writer of Birmingham labour history as a brief spark against a background of class co-operation and industrial peace, rooted in a complex economic and social structure inimical to the growth of militant trade unionism due to the multiplicity of trades, the predominance of small manufacturing and a high rate of social mobility. In this context, the bus industry provided a foretaste of the future as an example of monopoly capitalism which would become of feature of the engineering industry in the 1930's and 1940's. See Thesis by Robert Hastings - The Labour Movement in Birmingham 1927-45. University of Birmingham 1959.
173. Skelley pp.203-4.
174. Ibid pp.131-2.
175. Thus;
"On Thursday 13th. May and again on the 14th., while still refusing full reinstatement for their regular staff, the L.C.C. tried to get trams out of the New Cross Depot with volunteer labour. Once again huge crowds assembled outside the yard. Police battled with pickets to clear a way, but the tram was halted after a journey of just twenty yards; the police ordered the work to stop in order to prevent riots." - Skelley p. 275.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Even so reinstatement was;

"...still only secured by a promise...to allow substitutes engaged during the emergency to remain at work and to accept the transference of their own members where necessary to accomodate them." - Phillips (1976) p.245.

176. See Skelley p.275 and Phillips p.245.

177. Thus

"In Wallasey, the Corporation used the strike as a means of 'weeding out the malcontents'. Eight months later, sixty Wallasey tramwaymen were still not reinstated. In Birkenhead the company had taken on volunteers plus forty permanent employees and had managed to run buses but not trams. All the strikers were given notice. But after various deputations from the men and from several local unions and a two-day continuance of the strike by local dockers, the Council agreed to reinstate all 380 strikers as jobs became available. By 27th. May there were only thirty-one still out of work, but feelings had run high and police protection was necessary on the first day of the trams operation.

..Liverpool, however, was a different position. The Corporation had been in favour of disciplining the strikers and could probably have done without the fifth of the labour force who had stayed out the whole nine days..." - Phillips (1976) p.245.

178. J. Harris op. cit. pp236-7.

179. Phillips p. 245.

180. At the end of 1925 Union membership peaked at 376,251. By 1928 the membership had slumped to 315,819 and only amalgamation with the Worker's Union bringing nearly 90,000 members reversed the trend. The table below shows the membership of the different trade groups from 1925 to 1930, after which year membership figures in each trade group were no longer published in the Annual Report of the Union, the source of these figures.

-----TABLE-----

MEMBERSHIP OF THE T. & G.W.U. BY TRADE GROUP 1922-1930¹

YEAR	ROAD PASSENGER	ROAD COMMER'L	GENERAL WORKERS	DOCKS	POWER	TOTAL
1925	94,933	29,098 ²	78,603 ²	116,474	-	376,251
1926	76,092	39,739	82,530	103,896	21,472	335,791
1927	77,049	36,685	73,806	99,244	20,658	319,533
1928	83,919	38,505	65,965	95,389	20,414	315,819
1929	93,549	38,571	70,362	97,641	21,127	422,836 ³
1930	100,835	38,482	70,053	93,755	20,716	422,048 ³

1. Not all trade groups included, eg. Waterways, Clerical
2. In 1925 the South East Region had one trade group covering both Road Commercial and General Workers with a further 42,427 members not shown here.
3. Worker's Union forms separate trade group not shown.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

181. Employment totals taken from D.L. Munby op.cit. The figures for membership of the T. & G.W.U. from Annual Reports and from 'The Record' March 1935. As regards the N.U.R. membership in the industry, the only figures available suggest 4,705 members in June 1932 (Bagwell 1963 p.508) at a time when the T. & G.W.U. claimed 22,240 in the Provincial Bus industry. This fell to 2,472 members in January 1934 (Bagwell 1963 p.564)
182. Bullock op. cit. Vol. 1. pp. 375-7. The national officers of the union who accompanied Bevin were John Cliff, Harold Clay and Archie Henderson. All of them tram or bus officials at some time.
183. Ibid. pp. 396-405.
184. "The Labour Party's Political Thought - A History" - Geoffrey Foote, Croome-Helm, London 2cd. Edition 1986 See Part Three especially Chapter Eight on 'Corporate Socialism'
185. Thus;
"As Industry has passed out of industrial ownership to the large-scale organisation, this type is becoming of far greater importance. He is the man who has to get the job done and to be continually inspiring, organising, directing the affairs of the great undertaking. I frankly confess in my job, the large-scale organisation of labour, I feel more akin with this type than I do with the so-called Director."
Quoted in Bullock op.cit. p.396.
186. Agreements were signed for retraining in Newcastle in 1926 and in Manchester, Salford, Oldham, Leicester and Stockport in 1928 and Nottingham Corporation agreed to extend the tramway agreement to bus workers in the same year. In January 1930 an agreement was signed for busmen employed by Birmingham Corporation, '...the largest municipally owned bus fleet in the world'. (See 'The Record' March, May, September, October, November and December 1928. For Birmingham see the edition of January 1931.)
187. See 'The Record' January and June 1934. Also the Ministry of Labour Gazette which records the following details. The strike included 849 Tramway and Omnibus workers in Swansea, Neath, Llanelli & Portedawe from 24th. to 25th. May. The work resumed on the advice of the Trade Union, half the 2/- reduction was restored immediately and half to be negotiated. Volume XLII p.222.
188. In the mid-1930's Sheffield, Glasgow, Leeds, Bradford and the L.C.C. became Labour controlled. (See "The Labour Party in Perspective" - C.R. Attlee, Left Book Club, Gollancz, London, 1937 p. 54) As the General Manager of Bradford Corporation Tramways explained in May 1935;
"The necessary funds to enable the unions to function are furnished by the members in the form of a membership subscription, and in my opinion, it is not quite playing the game, and certainly unreasonable, for non-members, (on whatever grounds their objection is based) to expect to participate in any advantages or benefits resulting from the efforts of Trade Union Executives, when they have contributed nothing towards the expenses incurred

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

therewith." ('The Record' May 1935.)

189. As the Annual Report and Biennial Trade Group and Departmental Review of the T. & G.W.U. March 1933 puts it:

"A number of factors have contributed to a contraction in services and consequently a reduced personnel in the industry. Notwithstanding these difficulties, however, the membership has been well maintained and now stands at a figure over 100,000."

190. Thus the T. & G.W.U. Annual Report of 1926 writes;

"We have had to contend with many local associations, some formed definitely by the employers, who offered alluring terms to our people. Others have been formed by employees with more or less open support from the employers. With very few exceptions these associations have been short lived, and where members have taken the bait they have later returned to our ranks. These attempts at local organisations have been against the interests of passenger workers, and though we have not taken them too seriously they have had to be faced, and this has kept officers engaged in dealing with their effects whereas had this not been necessary then the officers could have been breaking new ground."

For details of the company union in Midland Red see an unpublished M.A. by Robert Hastings "The Labour Movement in Birmingham 1927-45" Birmingham University 1959, which refers to an article in the 'Birmingham Post' of May 14th. 1926.

The attempt to strangle unionisation demands with Welfare Committees and the like continued well into the 1930's. In June 1934 'The Record' reports;

"...On these concerns we have many who can rank among our best and most reliable members, but their work has been made harder, their difficulties increased, by the fact that others have been led away by the promises of what could be obtained by welfare committees, committees of men's representatives and other such bodies. These organisations can be of no real and permanent value to workers."

191. Table compiled from Hibbs (1975) pp. 49-51. for fleet size and largest territorial companies. The details of union agreements come from the Annual Reports of the T. & G.W.U. for 1926, 1927 and 1928. Also the Biennial Reports from April 1st. to March 31st. 1929-31, 1931-33, 1933-5, 1935-7 and 1937-9.

Notes :

Note A. - Autocar was acquired by East Surrey Traction in 1928 and East Surrey became part of the L.G.O.C. as London Country in 1931.

Note B. - Redcar of Tonbridge was taken over by Maidstone & District in 1935.

192. Bagwell. (1963). op. cit. See pp. 503-509.

193. According to Crosland-Taylor the old Great Western Railway employees had "...railway rates of pay and railway privileges as regards coal, free travel and other things. They were scattered over the whole system- Wrexham, Johnstown, Corwen, Oswestry, Pwllheli, Aberystwyth, Machynlleth, Dolgellau. All these places had special railway

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

wage sheets and there was endless bickering between them and the Wrexham Company's staff who were members of the Transport and General Workers' Union. The whole thing was most difficult and while this state of affairs existed we should get nowhere. Claude used to be wild about it... (Crosland-Taylor (1948) op. cit. p. 56.) The existing N.U.R. members were paid by the company to leave the N.U.R. and join the T.G.W.U. See also 'A History of Crosville'- Roy C. Anderson pp.164-5.

194. The strike lasted from August 8th. through to November 16th. The dispute arose from a summary dismissal of a driver and conductor, and despite strong support from the N.U.R., the company refused to negotiate and dismissed all 100 strikers. Bagwell (1963) op.cit. pp. 508-9.

195. Thus in 'The Record' we find the following cases; September 1927 a strike at Port Talbot over the dismissal of a union organiser, October 1928 a four day strike at Aberdare Motor Omnibus Company over dismissal of a conductor, in November 1928 a strike over three dismissals at the Imperial Bus Company of Belfast, November 1932 at B.A.T. in London a successful strike over dismissal.

196. 'The Record' July 1932, see report from Bob Senior, Bournemouth Tram Branch.

197. 'The Record' January 1931.

198. The six companies were the Lewis Omnibus Company, Astons, the Watford Omnibus Company, the Power Omnibus Company and West Herts. Motor Services all of Watford and E. Prentice and Co. of Tring. See 'The Record' November 1932 and January 1933.

199. These were Northern General, Sunderland & District, Tynemouth and District Electric Traction Company, Wakeford Motors and the General Omnibus Company. See 'The Record' December 1932.

200. See 'The Record' June 1934.

201. See 'The Record' June 1934, October 1934, December 1934, January, February and June 1935.

202.

TABLE

 THE PROVINCIAL STRIKE WAVE 1935-8

YEAR	DATE	NUMBER INVOLVED	COMPANY/AREA INVOLVED
1935	3/4th. Aug.-12th.Sep	186	Ammanford & District
1935	18th. Aug.-12th.Sep.	1,600	South Wales/Swansea
1936	4th.-15th.January	450	United Counties
1936	2cd.-6th. May	459	City of Oxford
1936	14th.June-1st.July	616	Thames Valley
1936	1st.-2cd. August	1,300	Lanarkshire/ S.M.T.
1936	28th.-29th. Nov.	1,200	Glasgow Corporation
1937	9th.-19th. March	8,850	Scotland/ S.M.T.
1937	14th.April-8th.May	1,840	Maidstone & District
1937	18th.April-8th.May	1,650?	East Kent Road Car
1937	19th.April-10th.May	833	Eastern Nat./Luton

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

----- TABLE CONTINUED -----			
1937	24th. April-10th. May	897	Eastern Counties
1937	1st. May-8th. May	597	City of Oxford/Other
1937	1st. May-9th. May	538	United Counties
1937	3rd. May-6th. May	309	East Yorkshire
1937	16th. May-27th. May	560	Eastern Counties
1937	26th.- 29th. June	5-600	Ribble/ Liverpool
1938	31st. Jan.-9th. Feb.	760	Devon General(?)
1938	3rd.-5th. May	1,098	Edinburgh/ S.M.T.
1938	29th. April-13th. May	755	Southern National

Figures mostly from the Ministry of Labour Gazette 1935-8. This source fails to mention the East Kent Road Car Company strike, part of the Home Counties regional strike wave, and generally understates the number involved since many smaller firms joined in. Part of the reason for this was the effect of actions under Section 93 of the Road Traffic Act 1930, the 'Fair Wages Clause' which would force operators up to the standard wages set by the combine companies. With the exception of the East Kent strike, all other figures for the number on strike derive from the Ministry of Labour Gazette.

203. See "A History of British Bus Services: South Wales" - David Holding and Tony Moyes, Ian Allen Ltd., Shepperton, Surrey 1986 p.100. The authors inexplicably give the strike date as August 3rd. 1934 when it is in fact 1935.

204. The Ministry of Labour Gazette p.357 and p.400 claims 186 workers on strike in Ammanford, joined by an estimated 1,600 in sympathy.

205. 'The Busmen's Punch' number 35, September 1935.

206. A leaflet issued by Matthews and James urged the men not to boycott the new branches, on the grounds that there are '...Ernest Bevins in other unions...'. The correct course of action, they said, was to; "...go into the meetings and set up four strong committees of sincere fighters. These four committees can then be linked together by a strong co-ordinating committee." See the 'Busmen's Punch' number 38

It was at this point, that the London Rank and File Committee intervened and produced a provincial edition of the 'Busmen's Punch' calling itself the 'paper of the South Wales Rank and File Movement.' The paper lasted for five editions and was to centralise the discussion of the four new branches. In 1936 Bill Jones and William Payne from the London Rank and File Movement visited Swansea mostly to argue against breakaway unions. The aftermath of a bitter and defeated strike proved to be an inauspicious time to launch a South Wales Rank and File Movement. See the Provincial editions of the 'Busmen's Punch' beginning in April 1936.

207. The Strike Committee pointed to Tilling's stock-watering operation through which the nominal rate of return on capital in United Counties had increased from 8.3% to 9.25% concealing a real rate of return on capital of 12.5%, a 50% increase in profits over the years 1933 to 1935. See 'Justice for Busmen - United Counties Profits and the

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Busmen's Case' - United Counties' Employees' Central Committee. Northampton 1935.

208. Ibid. Some examples of routes considered too fast; "Wellingborough to Irchester- 3 miles - 5 compulsory stops and innumerable others. Time allowed - 8 minutes.

Kettering to Geddington via W. Park - 5 miles - usually 20 stops. Time allowed 15 minutes.

Wellingborough (Market Square) to Northampton (Abington Square) - 11 miles- 15 compulsory stops - time allowed 38 minutes. This service is extended to Canon Street, Wellingborough and Derngate, Northampton, making 38-45 stops in the same time allowance.

Rothwell to Desborough - 2 miles - load passengers, stops as required, unload passengers and begin return journey. Time allowed - 5 minutes."

210. Ibid. p. 9.

211. Clegg (1950) p.118.

212. As 'Justice for Busmen' explains; "...as our action was to be unofficial, we decided that to prevent any official interference it had to be arranged secretly and launched suddenly so that the company would have no chance to prepare against it."

213. Tillings employees arrived first from London, some of whom left when they realised the situation and then from Eastern Counties in Norwich. These men were casuals who were informed that if they refused to strikebreak they would "...never work for Eastern Counties again..". This led to a mass meeting of Eastern Counties men at Norwich on January 9th. where the 300 resolved to strike at midnight unless the casuals were withdrawn. (See 'Daily Worker' January 11th. 1936.) The company apparently forged a telegram from the full time official involved to Norwich persuading them that the situation in Northampton was resolved and that they should return to work. (Ibid. Jan. 14th.) Strikebreakers were also imported from the North East, from Belfast and from other parts of the Midlands.

214. Firstly windows were smashed, and where possible petrol pipes cut. When the company responded by putting barbed wire around the petrol pipes and wire mesh over the windows, spark plugs and catapults were used to smash the windows through the mesh. At Northampton, a mixture of straw and whitewash was applied to the windscreen when the buses were waiting at traffic lights. Another tactic was to kick the tyre valve off after posing as an intending passenger, and the company responded to this by welding aluminium plates around the valve. The most dramatic incident was at Desborough on the Sunday, when about 2,000 people turned out to stop the buses running. Only one bus appeared and was duly wrecked by the crowd. 'Daily Worker' January 10th. 1936

215. The company were severely criticised and the threat to withdraw their license if the service was not restored persuaded them back into negotiations. The Traffic Commissioners also invoked section 74 of the Act and threatened to withdraw the licenses of the strikers. Ibid. Jan 14th. and 16th. 1936.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

216. Thus an unofficial meeting at Grays included representatives from Chelmsford, Walton, Grays, Luton, Harwich, Colchester and Maidstone considered strike action in support of United Counties. See Marsh op. cit.

217. Scottish Motor Traction conceded an increase of one farthing (0.25d.) an hour for the Edinburgh Drivers and a halfpenny for all other drivers and conductors. The effect was to leave drivers wages between 1s 4d. per hour in Edinburgh down to 1s 1.75d. in the North of Scotland, and conductors on 1s 2.75d. in Edinburgh and as low as 10.5d. in the North of Scotland, the strikers were demanding 1s 5d for drivers and 1s 3.5d. for conductors. However S.M.T. firmly refused to consider the question of spreadovers, annual holidays and inside staff pay. Yet spreadovers meant that many staff were in uniform up to 84 hours per week and going home with as little as 57 shillings. 'Daily Worker' - March 10th. 1937.

218. Lord Thompson was chairman of the Board of Directors of S.M.T. which was formed as a result of an agreement between the L.N.E.R. and L.M.S.R. in 1929 to merge their interests in Central S.M.T. Co., Western S.M.T. Co. and William Alexander and Sons. The company controlled virtually all of Scottish road passenger transport apart from the municipalities. Thompson himself was Director of sixteen bus companies, the seven Directors held 98 company directorships between them, according to the 'Busmen's Punch' June 1935, number 32. Thompson of the S.M.T. Company had issued a statement at the beginning of the strike claiming that '...this strike is not only entirely unofficial but engineered by communist agitation'. (Ibid. March 10th. 1937) The Finance and General Purposes Committee of the Union, when it held an official inquiry into the activities of the Rank and File Movement, took the same view. Allen (1957) describes this inquiry's consideration of a Communist Party statement regarding the strike;

"...the statement dealt with the lessons in tactics which the Communist Party considered could be learned from it. It described how unofficial strikes could be won. The demands of the strikers, it stated, should strictly correspond to the power they possessed; they should not immediately be too costly to the management and should preferably concern such questions as victimization, harsh disciplinary action and schedules." See - "Trade Union Leadership" - V.L. Allen, Longmans Green and Co., London 1957

219. The first major success was the decision by Glasgow Corporation transport workers to a weekly levy of 2s and 6d on their 6,000 members. The following day, one week into the strike, Edinburgh garages voted unanimously to continue. The next day a second delegate conference voted by 45 garages to 9 to continue.

220. 'Daily Worker' Thursday 18th. March 1937.

221. Ibid. Friday 19th. March 1937.

222. On 14th. May 1937 over 1,000 men began a lightening strike in Tonbridge, Tonbridge Wells, Hastings, Chatham and Gillingham. At Maidstone drivers were reported to leave

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

their buses on the stands, whilst conductors placed their ticket machines on the ground beside the bus. Picketing was widespread.

223. Most details come from reports in the 'Daily Worker' from the 15th. April to 28th. May.

224. The main demand expressed at a Delegate Conference was for an easement of schedules with men complaining of being forced to drive between 40 and 45 m.p.h. on some routes. Strikers pointed to the increased profits of the Company, up from £51,660 in 1933 to £108,441 in 1936.

225. East Yorkshire busmen resolved that; 'busmen demand that the National Executive Committee make the strike of Maidstone and District and Chatham Busmen official and that the full resources of the union shall be utilised to ensure victory.' while busmen in Chelmsford, Greys and Luton met to consider action. The meeting in Chelmsford was attended by Maidstone delegates. 'Daily Worker' - 19th. April 1937.

226. Like Maidstone & District, the profits of Eastern National had risen rapidly over the last few years; from £21,090 in 1932 to £59,343 in 1935, whilst working conditions and wages had deteriorated. See "A World to Win" - M. Wallace, Chelmsford and District Trades Council 1979. pp. 82-7.

227. 'Daily Worker' Wednesday 21st. April 1937.

228. Thus Bevin wrote in his New Year address;

"We were considerably handicapped in our efforts to give effect to the decisions of the..[Leeds].. Conference by unauthorised strikes, which made the negotiations all the more difficult." - see 'The Record' January 1938 which also contains Clay's remarks on the same subject;

"In our approach to the employers we were not helped by a series of unauthorised strikes which took place. These stoppages made the position more difficult than would otherwise have been the case, and those responsible did a disservice to the provincial omnibus workers. the disputes were calculated to destroy confidence in the Union. These stoppages had an adverse effect upon local negotiations..."
Local negotiations? This is missing the point, surely they were supposed to be engaged in national negotiations! He goes on;

"...as those representatives who have taken part in subsequent discussions know. They have had proof that traffic which is lost is in many cases only recovered after a long period."

229. The East Kent Road Car Company garages at Canterbury, Folkestone, Dover, Ashford and Thanet joined the strike permanently. They were followed by Eastern National at Bedford and Cambridge spreading the strike to eight counties. Bedford Garage issued a statement of grievances;

"The causes for which we are now striking have been in our minds for three years, particularly since the speeding up of bus travel and working schedules. Our times for journeys have been speeded up by 75% in six years and we have to travel in places at over 30 m.p.h. which is more than the legal limit..."

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

What we want is a uniform agreement affecting busmen throughout the country with the exception of the Central London Passenger Transport Board Area." - 'Daily Worker' - April 24th. 1937.

230. Oxford explained in the following letter to Bevin; "There has been inexcusable delay in opening national negotiations and reaching a national agreement...

The present strikes are, we know, only the beginning, and will be followed by much bigger strikes in the main industrial areas of the country unless decisive steps are taken by the E.C.

We ask the E.C. to take a national ballot on strike action to secure a national agreement. Such an action would restore to some considerable extent the authority of the executive. The result of such a ballot should be reported back to a delegate conference at a date which the E.C. should fix immediately.

You are as much aware as we are that Combine Busmen are prepared to fight and will fight in any case unless some progress is made very soon. But how much better it would be both for the busmen and the Executive Council if that fighting feeling was used to obtain a really good national agreement. Busmen with their present organisation and in their present temper are a great power, which if wielded by our Executive Council cannot fail to win those wages and conditions which busmen everywhere are demanding."

See 'Circular Letter by J. Jackson Proposing Closer Co-operation By Busmen' - Central (England) Combine Busmen's Committee, 10th. May, 1937. National Library of Scotland. Acc. No. 4649

232. These were that there should be an immediate meeting between the Executive Committee of the Union and the Combines to reach a National Agreement. The C.C.S.C. wished this agreement to include; 2d. an hour increase for all grades, time and a quarter after eight hours (each day standing alone) and on Sundays, revision of schedules, casual labour to be made permanent after twelve months and paid holidays after twelve months service. They also called for no victimisations as a result of the strike.

232. See 'Minutes of Conference of English and Scottish Busmen held at Chelmsford, 28th. April, 1937. National Library of Scotland, Acc. No. 4649.

233. Estimates of the numbers vary widely and it is difficult to be precise. My estimates are drawn from the figures provided by the Ministry of Labour Gazette but also include certain strikes which are left out such as the East Kent Road Car Company. The book by Wallace op. cit. claims 30,000 in London and 20,000 in the provinces which is a massive overstatement. The 'Daily Worker' by the beginning of May estimated that '...in the course of the next few days a total of 120,000 transport workers will be on strike in the provinces and throughout the country..' Nevertheless 32,000 is quite the largest strike in the history of the industry up to 1937.

234. In a letter from Sir Frederick Heaton to Harold Clay,

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Heaton commented;

"With regard to the question of a national agreement, for the reasons given to you in my letter yesterday, this is impractical at the present time and the men should appreciate the position quite definitely. The men on strike really represent a small proportion of the number engaged in the industry." (Daily Worker May 8th. 1937)

The return to work was not straightforward, as the City of Oxford Company tried to victimise 30 men and withdraw negotiating rights. The C.C.B.C. was sufficiently strong to call Maidstone & District, who had just returned to work, back out on strike whilst United Counties and Eastern National workers refused to return. The management in Oxford reversed their decision, no doubt under instruction from elsewhere, and the return to work was completed on May 10th. 235. See Bullock (1963) op.cit. p. 606. Allen (1957) op.cit. suggests a similar story in Chapter Four see especially p.66.

236. The best account of the Rank and File Movement is J. Barrett's M.A. Thesis. Fuller also gives a comprehensive account although he sees the main problem as right wing officials rather than the division between officials and the rank and file. Clegg's "Labour Relations in London Transport" - Blackwell, Oxford, 1950 is excellent on detail but provides little analysis of the Movement. "London Busmen: The Rise and Fall of a Rank and File Movement" - Pete Glatter in 'International Socialism' No. 74, January 1975, is excellent but makes no claims for impartiality. The PhD Thesis by Nina Fishman is so unsympathetic to the Movement as to be of limited value, for example (p. 186) we are informed that the '...busmen's general economic position continued to be satisfactory. With no outstanding grievance which was felt worthy of redress, it is not surprising that the rank-and-file themselves were content to simply get on with their work, apart from the occasional skirmish when the occasion arose...' This was because; 'London busmen had benefited from the provision that savings made as a result of speed-up would be divided, with 60% going to increase wages and the remaining 40% to management.' (p. 185) The conclusions from this argument are clear, busmen had nothing to lose from the Speed agreement! Thus the only explanation of militancy must be that they were all dupes of the Communist Party. This both insults the intelligence of bus workers and displays complete ignorance of the nature of bus work. The Thesis is valuable in terms of detailing the relationship between the Movement and the Communist Party and in the comparison with C.P. work in engineering in the same period.

237. "British Trade Unionism Today" - G.D.H. Cole, Gollancz, London 1939. pp. 307-9.

238. As the Rank and File Movement explained;
"...the time allowed for the journey is cut down to such an extent that in many cases they have to do one and a half journeys in the time previously allowed for one! A heavier and bigger vehicle, which has to be driven at more than

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

double the former speed through streets which were never intended to carry such juggernauts. Is it any wonder that the driver has found the strain impossible to bear? So also has the conductor, whose job has practically doubled, with the increased number of passengers carried, while the speed of the bus from point to point makes it necessary for him to rush around in an endeavour to get his fares in, leaving him no time to be courteous or look to the safety of passengers boarding or alighting." - "London Busmen Demand the Right to Live a Little Longer" - London Rank and File Movement 1937. p. 4.

239. In 1928 there was a work to rule in Merton and a strike at Forest Gate and Romford over faster schedules, in October, there were nine unofficial strike threats in one week. In Easter 1929 there was a work to rule led by the Minority Movement at Cricklewood resulted in twenty one suspensions. When four of them appeared before a joint L.G.O.C./Union Disciplinary Board, the Minority Movement called an unofficial strike which five garages offered to support. The disciplinary action was dropped. See Barrett p.56 and Fuller p.100. Interestingly the third volume of the C.P.'s official history (the first two were by Klugmann), written by Noreen Branson covering 1927-41 ignores Communist activity on London Buses before 1932.

240. Ministry of Labour Gazette XXXVII 1929 p.424.

241. Busmen's Punch, March 1936.

242. As J.T. Murphy, a leader of the wartime shop stewards movement and ex-Communist wrote in 1948;
"Thus died the Minority Movement, much as the General Strike had died. Ernest Bevin and his colleagues had called off the General Strike to avoid open warfare with the government; Harry Pollitt called off the Minority Movement to avoid open warfare with the T.U.C. and many executives of trade unions." See "Labour's Big Three" - J.T. Murphy, Bodley Head, London 1948. p.137.

244. 'The Worker' May 10th. 1929. Quoted in Barrett op.cit.

245. As Holloway Bus Worker explained;
"...the machinery of the Branch with its threatening, lying and interfering instructions from Union H.Q. cannot possibly lead us in our struggles to defend conditions except when used UNCONSTITUTIONALLY. Whilst it can and must be used to expose the officials and lead the men in defiance of H.Q. instructions. Experience shows that a clear united leadership and policy...can only operate through freely elected Rank and File Action Committees." (no date) See Bill Jones File, Modern Records Centre, Warwick.

246. The 'Bus Wheel' for example carried an article on public ownership entitled 'A Great Sham Fight' which claimed that; "...changing the form of capitalism from private companies to state controlled concerns is a problem of interest to the capitalist class whose property is being transferred, but it is not a question that is worth the attention of the workers..." Number 6. October 1931.

247. 'The Worker' May 10th. 1929.

248. Thus Fuller's assessment that the Rank and File

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Movement arose 'largely out of Communist initiatives and was led by Communists' (p. 109) overlooks the fact that Communist tactics actually delayed the formation of the Movement.

249. Thus in September 1930 194 buses were withdrawn and 250 dismissed only to be reinstated on a shorter guaranteed week. In August 1931 100 buses were withdrawn and 500 threatened with dismissal, these redundancies were reduced to 125 but only for the loss of one day in sixty across the fleet. In December 1931 300 redundancies were announced together with three months notice of termination of the agreement and wage cuts of 3/6d. for drivers and 3/- for conductors.

250. The deal included a reduction in the working day from 9 to 8.5 hours, a reduction in the maximum spreadover, and a shortening of the guaranteed week and this wages for 600 spare men to 32 hours for four months and 40 hours for eight months.

251. This marked a major shift for the Communist Party who throughout 1931 attacked the 'Bus Wheel'; 'It gives the impression of militancy without the slightest pretence to organise against the Company's attacks' (Holloway Bus Worker - June 1931). In January 1932 they were claiming there were three papers; '... The Record' for the officials, 'The Bus Wheel' for the would be officials and the 'Busmen's Punch' for the workers.. Busmen's Punch No. 5 January 1932. This paper folded and was relaunched in July 1932 to become the joint paper of both groups, in the Rank and File Committee.

252. Fuller op.cit. p. 112.

253. The garage stopped immediately in the face of a 300 strong picket on Wednesday January 23rd. 1933. The next day, several hundred strikers marched to Upton Park bringing out a further 1,100 men. On Friday, Barking, Camberwell, Dalston and Seven Kings joined in. On Saturday Athol Street, Battersea, Elmers End, Enfield, Holloway, Merton, Middle Row, Nunhead, Romford, Sutton, West Green and Willesden joined in together with Hanwell Tram Depot. On Sunday they were joined by Chelverton Road, Clay Hall, Hackney, Hammersmith, Putney, Leyton and Shepherds Bush together with Stonebridge Park Tram Depot. On Sunday night the action began to falter as Old Kent Road reversed their decision and Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush decided to resume work the next morning.

254. Barker & Robbins op. cit. Volume II p.326.

255. The Communist Party played down the weakness of the organisation during the strike. As Pollitt wrote enthusiastically in Labour Monthly; "The experience of the London Busmen's Rank and File Movement should be carefully studied by the militant workers in every industry. The determination of the mass of London's busmen...was expressed through the setting up of a rank and file committee... drawing its authority from the garages and branches, who looked to it to lead the fight against the company independently of the trade union officials, but with the full force of the trade union branches and garages

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

behind it."

Whereas George Renshaw in "The Victorious Strike of the London Busmen and its Lessons." RILU Publications 1933 was much more critical.

256. "Trade Union Leadership" - V.L. Allen, Longmans, Green and Company, London 1957. As he says;

"The Communists concentrated on getting powerful lay trade union committees to affiliate to the Movement. In the Central London Area Bus Committee they found one such committee which fairly quickly came under the control of the London Busmen's Rank and File Movement.[In fact members of the Rank and File Movement were elected to the Central Bus Committee at the end of 1933 and formed a majority thereafter] From then onwards its policy ran counter to that of the Union Executive and there was no way in which the executive could change it except by suspending the machinery, declaring the movement subversive, and taking disciplinary action against its leading members...Perhaps difficulties would have arisen in any event from the rank and file movement though without the Central London area Bus Committee it would have been less effective than it was amongst London Busmen." See pp. 64-5.

257. As Renshaw commented;

"We number the Rank and File militants in thousands - we count our Communist recruits on our fingers... the Party does not work in the trade unions and the factories as a Party, but as individual militants...The party loses its identity in the very movements it has helped to create." (quoted in Glatter op. cit. from 'How Does the Party Work?' - Communist Review, December-January 1933-4.)

As R.P. Dutt had warned in the 'Daily Worker' in the middle of 1932;

"...under cover of the absolute and agreed necessity of strengthening a hundredfold our work in the reformist trade unions there has begun to appear increasingly a very different tendency - a tendency to preach confidence in the reformist trade unions and in the reformist trade union machine as organs of working class power."¹³⁶

Quoted in "Essays on the History of Communism in Britain" - M. Woodhouse and B. Pearce, New Park, London, 1975. p. 127.

258. Thus when L.C.C. trams joined the London Passenger Transport Board Clapham and New Cross depots noted the attempted introduction of speeded schedules as they '...had to show times which compared favourably with those operated by the buses...' The New Cross branch investigated the existing running times at Bricklayers Arms and found of 84 cars on the down line, 9 were on time, 8 were early on account of being turned before the terminus and 67 were running late. ('Busmen's Punch' Number 9 July 1933) Further; "One journey which previously took one hour 36 minutes now takes only one hour 22 minutes. On another, which is claimed to be the fastest tram road in Great Britain, the speed, including all stops, averages 12.5 miles per hour. On this particular route the buses, which run also, are allowed more time by several minutes." ('Busmen's Punch' Number 16,

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

February 1934.)

259. As Clegg explained;

"The Board argued that trolley busmen had been treated as tramwaymen wherever the vehicles had been introduced in the provinces; they used the same depots, operated on the old tramway routes; and were therefore to be treated and paid as tramwaymen in London. The busmen were apprehensive of the trolley; it might be a better vehicle than the petrol bus; with lower rates of pay it might undercut their position; and to avoid that they demanded bus rates for trolley-bus workers. Thus the tramwaymen, who would all be transferred in the end, would make sure of achieving bus rates in the long run through transference. The union agreed with the Board; if the trolleys carried bus rates, the remnants of the declining tram section would be left behind for as long as the tram survived; assimilate the new, and more economical, vehicle, to the tram section, and the whole section would have an argument, in increased takings and in changed traffic conditions, for levelling up to the bus rates." Clegg (1950) op.cit. pp 114-115.

260. The demands issuing from the conference were supposed to include a paragraph relating to railway employees' demands, but this was withdrawn at the railway workers request in order for them to draft another set of demands in consultation with their colleagues. In March, a threat by the London District Council of the N.U.R. to strike over a suspension was followed by a stern warning by the N.U.R. Executive that it alone had the power to authorise a strike. The potential for a rank and file type organisation on the railways was thus limited. See Clegg (1950) p. 114.

261. As one Trolley-Bus delegate explained;
"Our conditions are different, our uniforms are different, and we do one and a half days more work a week than they do. The conductor takes approximately an average of £10 a week more than he did on a tramcar. The intensification has increased 10 to 15% compared to the trams..." Quoted in Fuller op. cit. p. 136.

262. Thus in March 1933 there was 'The Call Note', an unofficial tram journal. In May 1934 'The Busmen's Punch' reported a trams 'rank and file' meeting attended by 19 tram branches, and in November the monthly Rank and File meeting was attended by 78 delegates representing 16 bus and 14 tram branches. The exact evolution of tram rank and file organisations is unclear. According to Clegg (1950) for a time in 1934 the Eastern District Committee of the Tram's Council set itself up as the 'rank and file committee for the trams' (see p.115). This was then followed by the 'Justice for Tram and Trolley-Bus Committee, set up in September 1935 (See Fuller p. 137) which by 1936 had become the 'Justice for London Tramwaymen Committee' (Clegg p.116). In February 1934 New Cross trams had affiliated to the Rank and File Movement to join Hanwell, Fulwell, Stonebridge Park and Edmonton, a total of five out of thirty five branches.)

263. 'Busmen's Punch' Number 26, December 1934.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

264. These were;

January 22cd-23rd 1933 Hanwell Trams - in sympathy with Forest Gate buses.

January 22cd-24th 1933 Stonebridge Park Trams - in sympathy with Forest Gate buses and objections to new schedules.

May 9th 1934 Hanwell and Acton Trams - Alteration to arrangements for inspection of new schedules.

From Fuller op. cit. p.123. From 'Record of Industrial Disputes In Which Staff Have Taken Action Since 1st. January 1933: London Transport Board.

265. E.C. Firminger, Joint Secretary of the 'Justice' Committee, and delegate from New Cross depot to the Rank and File Movement complained on two counts; Firstly;

"...that no member of the London Trams Council, no member of the Joint Divisional Committee and no member of the negotiating committee was aware of this settlement or that it had been signed by the Executive Committee prior to the Tuesday of the week it was posted in all depots..."

And secondly that;

"...this settlement is an attempt to tie the tramwaymen's hands for another two years. Within two years half the trams will have been replaced by trolley-buses which will have gone some way towards undermining central bus conditions."

See 'Busmen's Punch' Number 38 December 1935, Clegg (1950) pp.115-6, and Fuller pp. 137-140. Fuller is misleading on this issue, because he confuses a meeting in November 1934, mentioned previously here, with others in 1935. Snelling's talk of accelerating the Trammen's progress and the T.O.T. resolution quoted by Fuller on p.138 took place one year earlier than he claims, thus confusing the order of events. Details of the pay differentials are in Clegg (1950) p. 71.

266. Of fifteen Central Divisional branches only Hampstead had accepted, nineteen branches had held mass meetings to reject the offer.

267. Clegg describes what happened;

"On the 9th...[March 1936]..Streatham and Clapham depots struck on the question of meal reliefs for those working tramcars which ran late. The decision was taken by a large majority, and the 'Justice for London's Tramwaymen Committee' met at once to issue a call for sympathetic action. On the following day only two more depots had followed - 1,000 men in all - and after union officials had addressed a meeting of the men, and the Board had issued threats of dismissal, the strike fizzled out". (pp. 115-6.) On the following day, a possibly connected strike at Wood Green Tram Depot took place involving 307 men, and the following month Fulwell and Hounslow Trams and Trolleys struck for two days over new schedules. This was the end of the 'Justice Committee'. (See Ministry of Labour Gazette XLIV 1936 p.147 for the Wood Green strike and Fuller p.123 for the Hounslow and Fulwell strike.)

268. The 'Busmen's Punch' of August 1935, Number 34, contains the following information about conditions; Rests days, no Saturdays at all and only two Sundays in Forty, often after a shift finishing at 1.00 a.m.

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Cuts in timings, e.g. the Windsor Hospital, Trafalgar Square route to one hour fourteen minutes.

Cuts in wages; those transferring from 'Premier' - Inside Staff from ls. 4.5d. to ls. 1.5d. per hour, conductors and drivers in some instances by between 3/- and 7s 6d. per week. Plus the 'Acquired Company's Agreement' which left existing drivers 2/6d below the weekly rate of new starters. Clegg (1950) p. 71 gives details of wage rates which were well below Central London rates.

269. See Glatter op. cit.

270. Ministry of Labour Gazette, 1935, Volume XLIII p.277.

271. Glatter op. cit. p. 7.

272. A classic example of this process was in June 1935. Nunhead Garage struck over disciplinary action against one crew. The following day, a total of 4,986 men were on strike in sympathy. Most of the C.B.C. and consequently Rank and File Movement leaders were in the Isle of Man for the Union's Biennial Delegate Conference, Clay and Bevin took the extraordinary step of chartering a plane to fly them back to London. The dispute provoked an argument inside the Movement with Sharkey, a Communist Party member, criticising Nunhead for not using the machinery, '...we expect some discipline to be maintained as far as our membership is concerned..' See Fuller op.cit. p.126. and pp. 142-147.

273. 'Daily Worker' - Monday May 3rd. 1937.

274. Fuller op.cit. p.151. Also 'Daily Worker' Saturday 15th. March.

275. The resolution claimed; "...that the trams and trolley-buses should immediately be called into the dispute officially. The fact that they are allowed to continue is tantamount to allowing Blacklegs to operate. They are carrying our passengers and by working are bringing revenue to the Board, that normally would be earned by busmen, so prolonging the dispute." - 'Daily Worker' - May 14th. 1937.

276. Quoted in Fuller p. 151. from circular by E. Bevin entitled 'To the members of the London Bus Section, Central Area' - 29th. May 1937.

277. Papworth later rejected this view;

"Even supposing you could not bring the tramwaymen out with us on our application, which I agree you could not in view of the agreement, when you found the Tram members against their will carrying our normal passengers and paying in our normal revenue the situation had changed... Two days after the strike began three branches circularised the fleet demanding that either the trams should be bought out or that they should be stopped from doing our work. Not one member of the delegate conference ever believed that the executive would permit the conditions of the road as happened during the strike." (Quoted in Pete Glatter op.cit. from the Union Inquiry into the strike.) What comes out clearly from these two statements is the confusion shown by Papworth. He effectively defends the 1936 Tram agreement which as we showed earlier was negotiated behind the back of the Trams Council, the Joint Divisional Committee and was signed by the E.C. Secondly he expresses surprise that the Executive

Notes Transport Trade Unionism

Committee should act in such a way as to undermine the strike, when surely the whole reason for the existence of the Movement was precisely that the Executive would act in this way.

278. 'Daily Worker' - Monday May 17th. 1937.

279. Fuller claims that '..the Movement quite openly intervened in disputes elsewhere in the union..' (p. 147) It may be true they intervened, but not in an unconstitutional way. In the case of the Green Line strike, they acted as Rank and File members after a meeting with full time officials, in the Scottish strike there is little evidence they intervened at all, in the United Counties and Thames Valley strikes of 1936 they simply raised money and in the Provincial strike of April and May 1937 they made no contacts with the C.C.B.C.

280. As Clegg writes;

"It is impossible to determine whether Mr. Bevin believed that the bus strike could succeed, or whether, trusting to the firmness of the Board, he allowed the strike to go forward (preventing its extension), in order to destroy the movement which had opposed his leadership for so long. Both views are held by participants in the events..." (p. 129)

281. V.I. Allen op. cit. p.70.

282. In May there was a strike at Eastern Counties in Norwich and Cromer and among Ribble workers in Liverpool in late June. The following year there was a spontaneous strike by Southern National workers, members of the N.U.R., which spread across Southern England. In May 1938 Edinburgh S.M.T. workers struck over the dismissal of a conductor and grievance with pay negotiations, but a ballot of the fleet for strike action was unsuccessful. A second unsuccessful ballot for strike action over pay followed in May 1939.