THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE MANAGEMENT OF INDUSTRIAL DISCONTENT IN INTERWAR BRITAIN: THE CASE OF THE NATIONAL UNEMPLOYED WORKERS' MOVEMENT, 1921-1939

by

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Abstract

In order to understand the capacity for state action, we also need to consider the way in which the state responds to different forms of dissent. Framed by Open Marxist theories of the state and the insights of the revolutionary school of industrial relations and trade unionism, this thesis explains the responses of the state and the trade unions towards the National Unemployed Workers' Movement between 1921 and 1939. It advances Keith Middlemas's argument on corporate bias, recognising that interwar British administrations continued integrating business and labour associations as intermediaries of the central government to avoid the arrival of crisis and guarantee governability and social order. But it goes further to suggest that the TUC fell short as a governing institution to contain labour unrest so the state had to use its coercive apparatus against the NUWM and the CPGB to prevent industrial agitation. It draws on archival research from across the United Kingdom in order to argue that the state and the labour movement legitimised each other and joined together to marginalise the NUWM to protect their fragile institutional arrangement. The thesis contributes to the literature on the National Unemployed Workers' Movement portraying it as an industrial, political movement and presenting new evidence on the action of the state against the NUWM and a distinctive analytical perspective of the manner in which the emergence of the movement disrupted an implicit agreement between the state, trade union's representatives and employers' associations aimed at the arrival of crisis. It also contributes to ongoing debates about the state management of discontent.

List of abbreviations

AEU – Amalgamated Engineering Union

BSP – British Socialist Party

CWC – Clyde Workers' Committee

CPGB – Communist Party of Great Britain

EAENF – Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation

FBI – Federation of British Industries

ILP – Independent Labour Party

IUX – International Union of Ex-Servicemen and Adult Dependents

LDCUO – London District Council of Unemployed Organisations

MI5 – Military Intelligence Section 5

NAC – NUWM's National Administrative Council

NCEO – National Confederation of Employers' Organisation

NFDDSS – National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers

NMM – National Minority Movement

NUX – National Union of Ex-servicemen

NUWM – National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement (1921-1929) / National Unemployed Workers' Movement (1929-1939)

PAC - Local Public Assistance Committee

RILU – Red International of Labour Unions

SSAU – Soldiers', Seamen's and Airmen's Union

SSM – Shop Stewards' Movement

TGWU – Transport and General Workers' Union

TUC – Trade Union Congress

UAB – Unemployment Assistance Board

Introduction

This work examines the British state's responses, in cooperation with the trade union movement, towards the National Unemployed Workers' Movement (NUWM) as part of the governing strategies developed during the interwar years to prevent industrial conflict and to guarantee governability and social order. The interest to explore and explain how the British state managed to secure governability and social order during the turbulent interwar period comes from the extraordinary circumstances in which Britain found itself during these two decades; in no other period, at least in the twentieth century, this nation experienced the level of economic crisis, political uncertainty and labour unrest of the 1920s and 1930s.

The interwar period was an uncertain time for Britain: economic crisis, political instability and social unrest dominated throughout the land. Worries about the strengthening of the Labour Party and trade unions becoming sources of social agitation and a decline of parliamentary values developed in conservative circles. The two decades between the wars saw the succession of eight governments and the Monarch's unique intervention to refuse the resignation of a Prime Minister and suggest the formation of a national government composed of an alliance between the Conservative Party and the Labour Party that lasted four years.

Economic managers were worried to re-establish pre-war stability and confidence and contain the budget expansion (Pugh, 1994, p. 164). The return to Gold Standard, which was seen as the outstanding measure to re-gain stability, proved economically devastating. The period was framed by the enlargement of the national debt and the downturn of the emblematic British industries (Pollard, 1970, p. 1; James, 1978, p. 152) which brought mass and long-term unemployment, between 1.3 and 3.4 million people at any given time, between 9.7% and 22.1%

of the insured population[1], concentrated in north England, south Wales and Scotland, with an insolvent relief fund to tackle it (Garside, 1990, pp. 3-5).

To seek to guarantee political stability and governability during this unstable period, interwar British administrations continued a tendency initiated in 1911 consisting in the institutional growth and tentative integration of labour and capital interests into the state arena as an implicit contract, providing business and labour associations with administrative and representative functions as intermediaries of central government (Middlemas, 1979, pp. 371-383).

In this context, the NUWM emerged to articulate unemployed workers' organisation to demand employment or full maintenance from the state. Between 1921 and 1939, the NUWM mobilised hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers, demonstrating locally – around local Labour Exchanges – to pressure the officials to provide more relief and at higher rates for the unemployed, and nationally – with massive marches from all over the country – to demand the national government to deliver progressive policies on behalf of the unemployed workers. Closely linked to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), the NUWM sought an alliance with the labour and trade union movement to fight together for the betterment of labour conditions which proved unsuccessful and fragmented, with dissonant responses from different trade unions and trade councils. The NUWM attempted to unify the employed and unemployed workers together as a class – and use its strength to pursuit workers' material aspirations and political aims. The emergence of the unemployed workers' movement disrupted the state's project – and highest priority in industrial politics – to avoid class struggle to the point of crisis

[1] To give dimension to interwar unemployment in Britain let us compare to the peak of unemployment in the twentieth century in the 1980s and 1990s, when unemployment reached 11.9% in the spring and summer of 1984 and 10.7% in the winter of 1992-1993, with a better unemployment insurance coverage (Office for National Statistics, available at https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/timeseries/mgsx/lms)

and its need to keep the working class's organisation fragmented and its collective aspirations separated from its political goals.

The development of the unemployed workers' movement attracted significant attention from British society, particularly the state, the trade union movement, business' associations, and the press. The state and the trade union movement sought to isolate and marginalise the NUWM, demonstrating disdain for the plight of the unemployed workers and regarding their mobilisation as an illegitimate expression of interests alien to the national interest. Despite the hostile attitudes received, the NUWM led the unemployed workers' mobilisations during the 1920s and 1930s, a period in which unemployment always remained above 10% and reached over 22% of the insured workforce at a national scale. Several studies have approached the case of the NUWM from different perspectives, however, the analysis of the rationale of the state's and trade union movement's responses remains underdeveloped. Furthermore, the view of those responses as a coordinated strategy towards the NUWM as part of a broader strategy of statecraft of industrial discontent management has not been adequately discussed.

This introductory chapter is divided into three sections. The first introduces the thesis's rationale and displays the thesis' aims, research questions and hypothesis. The second section briefly develops a reflection on method – archival and documentary analysis. The third section explains the structure of the thesis.

The argument of the thesis

The interwar British state developed a series of changing and adaptative strategies seeking to prevent industrial agitation. These strategies were directed against dissident, potentially disruptive organisations, associated with the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) – like the NUWM and the National Minority Movement (NMM). The strategies included the development of legislation to limit the capacity of organisations and mobilisations expressing

industrial discontent; the infiltration in labour organisations associated with communist ideology; the co-option of the unions' leadership to act against dissident organisations; and the use of the police and judiciary to harass and prosecute the leadership of revolutionary organisations.

The thesis explains how the state and the labour movement joined together to marginalise the NUWM to protect a fragile institutional arrangement aimed at preserving consent and stability through the prevention of industrial conflict. The significance and dimension of the unemployed mobilisation evidenced the limits of the capitalist state to fulfil the working class's aspirations and the fragile, temporary character of institutional arrangements between power groups to prevent the arrival of crisis. The type of organisation, demands and background of the NUWM made it a movement impossible to co-opt. Furthermore, the NUWM sought to organise the working class – employed and unemployed workers together – as a class, which countered the divisions of labour derived from the constant interrelations between trade unions and the state. The state portrayed the NUWM's disruption as intolerable indiscipline that had to be crushed. It used the trade union movement to delegitimise the NUWM. When that proved insufficient, it used the law and the police to stifle the unemployed's dissident organisation.

To a certain degree, this thesis follows the insights provided by Keith Middlemas (1979) about corporate bias as the system of government developed in early twentieth-century Britain aimed at reducing conflict to guarantee stability and governability. Middlemas explained that after 1911, corporate bias developed as an implicit contract between the state, trade unions' representatives and business' associations through which the TUC, the NCEO and the FBI became governing institutions committed to cooperation with the state. This association relieved interwar governments of the task of dealing with, and harmonising the clash of wills of, a large number of heterogeneous interest groups at all levels of political life.

The negation of the most obvious manifestations of class conflict faced the emergence of dissident groups that could not be included in the tripartite threshold and needed to be marginalised – without making a martyr of them. The most visible marginalised dissident organisation during the interwar years in Britain was the NUWM.

This work differs from the approach of many existing interpretations on the NUWM. Existing studies on the NUWM have approached its development seeking to measure its impact in terms of the realisation of its short term aspirations – the provision of employment or full maintenance for the unemployed workers – and long term aims – the end of capitalism and the advancement of socialism. This literature has generally overlooked the relevance of the unemployed workers' movement in terms of portraying the development of mass unemployment as an example of capitalism in crisis, bringing to the public agenda the question of the state responsibility on the unemployed workers' welfare, and representing the workless in their search of employment or full maintenance. Existing accounts on the NUWM have failed to frame the emergence of the NUWM in a set of theories that explain the capacity for action and limits of the capitalist state to fulfil social aspirations and channel discontent and conflict. Furthermore, previous studies on the unemployed workers' movement lack an analysis of how economic necessities translate into political necessities which explain how the economic constraints of interwar Britain defined the governing strategies that convert the need to defeat the NUWM into *raison d'Etat*.

The thesis first explains the governing strategies developed by the interwar British state to guarantee governability and capitalist exchange through its relationship with the unemployed workers' movement. Secondly, the thesis seeks to examine the logic behind the TUC's attitudes towards the NUWM. Thirdly, this research pursues to explain the reasons why the NUWM attracted a great degree of attention and hostility from the state and the trade unions. Fourthly,

the thesis aims at clarifying the NUWM's strategies to survive the interwar period, given the coordinated action of the state and the trade unions to marginalise it.

Research questions and hypothesis

- How did the British state manage industrial discontent between 1921 and 1939 given the exceptional type of unemployment and the adverse economic context?
- Why did the NUWM's mobilisations attract significant attention and aversion from the state and the TUC between 1921 and 1939?
- What explains the TUC's attitude towards the NUWM after 1921 and its variations within the following two decades?
- Which was the role played by the trade unions regarding its relationship to the state facing industrial discontent?
- How did the NUWM respond to the state and the TUC while organising the unemployed mobilisations during the interwar period?

The hypotheses guiding this research are: firstly, that the state developed governing strategies to minimise industrial conflict; secondly, that the state sought to co-opt the TUC and influence its strategies towards the NUWM; thirdly that the TUC acted to divide working-class opposition to the state through strategies that marginalised the NUWM; and fourthly, that the NUWM sought to develop a programme alliance with groups opposed to both the state and the TUC.

Archival research and documentary analysis

This thesis was conducted using the method of archival research and documentary analysis. Public records were collected from the National Archives (TNA), Kew. They included

governmental files from the Ministries of Labour (LAB), Munitions (MUN), Pensions (PIN), and Health (MH), Admiralty (ADM), Security Service (KV), Home Office (HO), Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Treasury Solicitor (TS), the Board of Education (ED), Records of the Public Bill Office, House of Lords (HL/PO/PU), and the House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (HOPP). These were supplemented with documents of the TUC, the FBI and the NCEO held by the Modern Records Centre (MRC), University of Warwick, and the Working Class Movement Library (Suffolk); and files belonging to Wal Hannington, the NUWCM, and the Communist Party of Great Britain, held by the Marx Memorial Library (London) and the Labour History Museum (Manchester).

The time elapsed between the events studied and our time permitted this research to consult a great number of files, including some only recently opened, like records produced by the Home Office and Security Services on diverse activities of the Communist Party and the NUWM (HO 144/19197; HO 144/22581; HO 144/22582; KV 2/4225, 26, 27).

Because of its temporality, research about state management of industrial discontent during the interwar years in Britain had to look for primary sources in the form of documents held by archives. But beyond this, a comment on archival research and documentary analysis and the importance of plausible, valid and reliable evidence is worth as an exercise of critical reflection on method, that is what distinguishes the academic study of politics from political journalism (Burnham et al., 2008, p. 1).

When dealing with documentary evidence, Catterall and Jones (1994, p. 5) suggest paying attention to documents' authorship, their intentionality, temporality, and audience intended. On the temporality and intentionality of documents, we can follow the classification provided by Burnham et al. (2008, p. 187) that reinforces that one of Lichtman and French (1978, p. 18). Under this classification, primary sources are understood as documents produced at the event in question and intended for internal circulation or restricted circulation only.

Secondary sources are those available to the public and circulated at the time or soon after the events. And tertiary are all material produced based on primary and secondary sources and, of course, of public domain (Burnham et al., 2008, p. 187).

Following that classification, the present research utilised mostly primary sources. From the public records, most of the files cited (LAB, MUN, CAB, PIN, ADM, KV, HO, DPP, TS, MH, and ED) are primary sources, except the extracts of parliamentary debates. From private collections (TUC, FBI, NCEO, NUWM, CPGB, and Hannington) the vast majority were minutes of meetings and correspondence produced for internal circulation only and, therefore, should be considered primary sources. Some pamphlets and briefings of national conferences (i.e. TUC and NUWM annual conferences) are secondary. This is important because in documentary and archival analysis, researchers must attempt to work with as many primary sources as possible (Ibid, p. 188). Such documents can be considered, to a certain extent, to aim to express – or assist – the activities of individuals, organisations, or communities, hence, for action, not for the use of researchers (Webb & Webb, 1932, p. 100 in Burnham, et al., 2008, p. 188; Bryman, 2012, p. 543).

The formality of the institutions that produced and store the documents consulted in this research guarantee a high degree of authenticity of such files. On the one hand, we are talking about the central and local governments, and other establishments and organisations of the state, the TUC, FBI, NCEO, CPGB and NCEO. On the other hand, the preservation of the documents consulted is in the hands of the National Archives, the Modern Records Centre (Warwick), the Working Class Movement Library (Suffolk), Marx Memorial Library (London) and the Labour History Museum (Manchester). This leaves little room for authenticity issues. Furthermore, anyone can access those repositories and consult the files listed throughout this work.

Once we have addressed the classification of sources and the authenticity of the documents used to conduct academic research, we can move to the question of credibility. According to John Scott (1990, p. 23), credibility refers to the degree of authors' sincerity and accuracy when recording an event or an idea. Researchers need to examine the circumstance in which authors produced the documents under examination to determine whether there are good reasons to trust its content and continually inquire if there were conditions that could lead the author to be insincere or inaccurate in producing the document (Ibid).

Although in the case of official documents there is less degree of flexibility for officials and politicians to register one view or another, it is still important to consider political interests involved in the production of such documents – public documents are not neutral, they are the working papers of governments (Lowe, 1997, p. 248). Researchers need to uncover prejudices that might have lead officials to produce a document in a determinate manner, to consider, for example, the temptation to present propaganda into apparently sincere information or to justify a particular choice of action (Scott, 1990, p. 23). Still, documents intended for restricted circulation might reflect more the writer's feelings or, in the case of a minute, a genuine record of a meeting. In contrast, in the case of material intended for public circulation, key passages can be suppressed – especially those on disagreements on a meeting (Bryman 2012, p. 555; Lowe, 1997, p. 247).

It is also essential to be aware of the conditions in which authors produced the documents used as evidence in research. Acknowledgement of temporal and spatial proximity of the document's author to the events in question is crucial for the information's quality. It is not the same to report a witnessed act – first-hand information – than to build a report based on collected notes – second-hand information (Scott, 1990, p. 24).

Even though this thesis's focus is not tracking the formulation and implementation of public policy, it is important to bear in mind the separation between concerns raised in the

cabinet, how those become specific strategies and then actions executed by civil servants. It is worth acknowledging that, at least in the UK, the nature of policy is ultimately determined in its implementation, rather than in its formulation. Hence, the researcher of public policy must pay attention to the work of ministers and officials, acknowledging variations in the degree of involvement of different officials in policy-making depending on the sensibility of each topic, the personality politicians and civil servants, and the features of each policy network (Lowe, 1997, p. 247).

Let us briefly draw on the problem of representativeness. This refers partly to the proportion of documents consulted of the totality of relevant documents available (Scott, 1990, p. 25), but also to the proportion of accessible documents to consultation from the sum of documents produced on a given topic. For this research, a list was created based on the files consulted by former research on the NUWM and added with sources found after a systematic search in the catalogues from the main archives in the UK, mainly the National Archives.

It is worth a comment on the availability for consultation of public documents from the UK, especially those produced before 1958, which is the case of all the public files used throughout this research. Lowe (1997, p. 241) called attention about incomplete, misleading and inaccurate records of documents produced by the Core Executive, the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet. Before 1958, there was no standardised policy of preservation of government record, so it would not be difficult that documents containing relevant information are not accessible because they were not properly stored (Ibid). But even after that date, the Public Record Office receives for classification and allocation in public archives only between 1 and 2% of the total records created in any given year (Burnham et al., 2008, p. 204). There is a need to consider all communication – mostly informal – that is not even recorded in a written form. When civil servants communicate with each other, they can do without necessarily leaving a trace of it. Many concerns raised in the government departments can be

shared between officials by telephone, and it is only those concerns transform into a more precise idea that they come to be registered officially or semi-officially (Lowe, 1997, p. 248). This is one reason why, when researching state action capacity, it is important to analyse not only documents produced by the state apparatus. As stated before in this section, this research used, apart from public records, files created by business associations (NCEO and FBI) and labour organisations (TUC and individual trade unions and trade councils.

Because of the long British tradition of industrial and business history, and of the importance given to the preservation of documents, it is possible to research a large number of records with relevant information about industrial activity. The tradition of preserving businesses' records in Britain started probably in the fourteenth century in London, Norwich and Bristol. But it was more systematically developed by joint-stock companies, a practise extended in the nineteenth century mainly by exploration, mining and railway companies and widened in the twentieth, when the Bank of England established its records office (Catterall & Jones, 1994, p. 44). This research searched files from different repositories from across the UK seeking to include the broadest perspective of relevant voices that provided light on the attitudes of the state and the trade unions to the NUWM and to triangulate the information to guarantee the greatest degree of control of the intertextuality of documents produced by different organisations (Bryman, 2012, p. 555).

It is also important to say a word on meaning. Documents do not speak for themselves; the researcher needs to interrogate them actively (Catterall & Jones, 1994, p. 6; Scott, 1990, p. 11). Researchers using documentary and archival analysis can easily assume that documents reflect an organisation's essence as if they were windows onto social and organisational reality (Bryman, 2012, p. 555). However, it is crucial to recognise documents in their context, understand their meaning and significance, consider their role in the policy-making process (Catterall & Jones, 1994, p. 7), the impression they are intended to convey (Bryman, 2012, p.

555). In short, to move from the source to the fact, "to revive the whole of that series of acts performed by the author of the document (Scott, 1990, p. 11). Throughout this research, primary sources' analysis is always accompanied by a contextualisation of the event in question. The corroboration of the original statements can be easily accessed following the respective reference.

Structure of the thesis

The thesis is further divided into six chapters: the first aims at locating the NUWM in the socioeconomic context of the interwar period in Britain and the existing literature. The chapter explains the main perspectives from which the movement has been studied and clarifies this work's contribution. The second chapter provides the theoretical framework of the thesis. It locates the NUWM in its relation to the state and the trade unions by discussing theories on industrial relations and the state that provide an understanding of industrial relations and the role of the state in industrial politics during the interwar years Britain. The subsequent three are empirical, and the last is the conclusion of the whole work.

The third chapter explains the formation of the NUWM and its relationship to the state and the trade unions from 1921 to 1926. It draws on the history of the organisations that preceded and influenced the formation and focus of the NUWM; the formation of the NUWM; its early approaches to the TUC and the experience of the Joint Advisory Council; the state's reaction, mostly in the form of infiltration and tracking of its activities; the first years of the NMM and its links to the NUWM; the case of the Unemployed Workers' Organisations in 1921; and the 1926 General Strike.

The fourth chapter explains the governing strategies to isolate and withdraw the NUWM – together with the CPGB and the NMM – from the arena of legitimate and legal negotiation of industrial politics in Britain between 1927 and August 1931. It addresses the

making and approval of the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act; the industrial cooperation talks between the labour and business' representatives during the second half of the 1920s; the TUC's strategies to withdraw the NUWM from the labour and trade union movement; the implementation in Britain of the New Line of communist politics, the decline of the NMM, and the restructuring of the NUWM during the late 1920s; and the second Labour government's strategies to attack the restructured unemployed workers' movement during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The fifth chapter analyses the state's strategies to undermine the influence of the NUWM from August 1931 to 1939. It focuses on the action exerted directly by the state, in the hands of legislation and the coercive apparatus – fundamentally the police against the NUWM's members. It also draws on the continuity of the TUC's attitudes to marginalise the unemployed workers' movement, as part of its efforts to remain a governing institution. The chapter also looks at the role played by the Communist Party in the second half of the decade to, seeking to build alliances with the social democratic parties facing the threat of the German invasion to the Soviet Union, left the unemployed workers' movement to continue fighting alone.

1.- Locating the NUWM in Literature and History

1.1.- Interwar Britain: an overview

Charles Mowat described the twenty years between the wars as the "history of disappointments of hopes of a happier society at home, of the nations of the earth living in peace and unity" (Mowat, 1968, p. 1). The interwar period was an era of speculation, false hopes, and easy prosperity, dreaming of the pre-war golden years returning. It was expected that British strength lay to a great extent on the restoration of the pound to its pre-war value and upon the stability of the exchanges (Pugh, 1994, p. 164). The debates about the Gold Standard framed the whole interwar period: the early years of the 1920s seeking its return, the second half of that decade realising its limits, and most of the 1930s facing its consequences and looking for alternatives to restore stability and growth. Apart from the restoration of the gold standard and the efforts towards achieving the pre-war pound level, the interwar years were marked by mass, long-term, unemployment. On top of this, the interwar years demonstrated an insolvent unemployment relief fund, the enlargement of the national debt and a decline of the old staple industries – coal, cotton, iron and steel – and to a lesser extent, shipbuilding, engineering and other export-oriented trades (Pollard, 1970, p. 1; James, 1978, p. 152).

Between 1921 and 1939 (the period covered by this thesis), five Prime Ministers representing three political parties governed Britain: David Lloyd George, Liberal (1916-1922), Bonar Law, Conservative (1922-1923), Stanley Baldwin, Conservative (1923-1924; 1924-1929; 1935-1937); Ramsay McDonald, Labour (1924; 1929-1935) and Neville Chamberlain, Conservative (1937-1939). Stanley Baldwin and Ramsay McDonald hold power for the longer period, and although McDonald belonged to the Labour Party, the conservative rule prevailed for most of the period.

From the end of the nineteenth century, the decline of the Empire and the development of self-governments in the colonies became a significant concern for the political and economic

elites and, soon after, World War I destroyed the British basis as international hegemon (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 70; Harrison, 1996, p. 58; Reynolds, 1991, p. 106). The long process of enfranchisement – that by 1918 gave the right to vote to 78% of the British population – the strengthening of trade unions and the spread of ideas on the minimal material conditions for human flourishing, all became public concerns throughout the land (Ball & Bellamy, 2003, pp. 9-10; James, 1978, p. 116). At the same time, the unification of small political organisations to form in 1900 the Labour Representation Committee, which became the Labour Party in 1906, and the strengthening of labour organisations brought concerns on social conflict and fragmentation and the potential transfer of the class struggle to party and parliamentary politics. Racial explanations became a new common basis of Englishness and ideas on economic efficiency, education, and commercial and technological progress –scientific research and rationalisation of the industry – became the new emblem of the collective good and general will (Heathorn, 1995, p. 423; Beaven & Griffiths, 2008, p. 210; Cronin, 1991, p. 51; Pollard, 1970, p. 151). Stanley Baldwin, PM for some eight years during the interwar period, shared this mindset, seeing the need to educate the new electorate to fit with the requirements of capitalist democracy, especially in values like conciliation and cooperation, particularly in the industrial field (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 87). To many, it was surprising that the new electorate proved to be more appeased and committed to parliamentary capitalist democracy than expected (Pugh, 1994, p. 157)

During the interwar years, significant economic policy efforts were dedicated to balancing the budget that during World War I had run into deficit (Cronin, 1991, p. 76; Pugh, 1994, p. 163; Reynolds, 1991, p. 106). During the 1920s and 1930s, state managers managed to keep a surplus of 5-10% of the GDP in the public-sector budget, after a deficit of more than 20% of the GDP experienced during the war (Middleton, 2010, p. 426). Since the late Victorian era, but especially with World War I, the expansion of the state in Britain and its role as the

main organiser of domestic economic policy developed in conflict with nineteenth-century laissez-faire. The change of the state's role in the economy came not as an ideological trend but as a practical strategy, as a condition to win the war (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 62).

The expansion of the government budget initiated during the war, mainly by borrowing from the US, although reduced in the post-war years, never came back to the pre-war levels. This made the debt problem one of the main concerns in state management during the whole interwar period, not only because of the extension of social policies but also because international creditors tended to recall their loans and retreat into protection (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 51; Pugh, 1994, p. 163). The value of the UK national debt during the interwar period remained over 150% of the national GDP (Middleton, 2010, p. 422). Its payment entailed around 24% of the total government expenditure during the 1920s and approximately 40% during the 1930s. The debt annual interest rate remained around £300 million that represented between 5 and 7.7% of the GDP (Pugh, 1994, p. 164; Middleton, 2010, p. 430). During the late 1920s, government expenditure increased, especially on pensions, unemployment insurance and the military, but the 1931 May Committee Report suggested a cut in spending for £97 million, including a reduction of 20% to unemployment insurance (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 76; Pugh, 1994, p. 168). The crisis of confidence and agitation created out of the discussion on cuts made the second Labour government fall in August 1931, created a constitutional crisis that derived in the formation of the National Government that governed until 1935 with Ramsay MacDonald as Prime Minister governing on behalf of the Conservatives (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 78). Public expenditure fell between 1931 and 1934, then stabilised and rose sharply from 1937 onwards, with the local authorities contributing more than the central government (Ibid, p. 111).

During the interwar years, the debate over the form and level of taxation became a centre of discussion in policy-making, especially given the decline of British overseas trade

(Cronin, 1991, p. 56; Pugh, 1994, p. 163; Mowat, 1968, p. 125). Liberals favoured free trade, opposed tariffs and pushed for a direct income tax, along with other taxes on wealth. Conservatives sought to protect British products, by excluding competing goods from domestic markets and promoting domestic goods across the Empire and by broadening the base of taxation, to include indirect taxes, to remove attention from capital accumulation; mostly inherited land (Cronin, 1991, p. 56; Pugh, 1994, p. 164). However, the need to finance the war and manage economic downturns made it inevitable to increase revenues, mainly through income tax. Labour leaders, backed by trade unions, opposed income tax and increasing insurance contributions. Instead, they pressured for capital levy as a solution for revenues. Throughout the 1920s, the Liberals who had remained in the party – after its most progressive figures had migrated to the Labour Party – joined the Conservative Party, together with business and financial interests, in opposition to Labour and trade unions' proposals towards capital levy. The central tendency in taxation during the interwar years was towards a general reduction, except in ad-valorem duties (Cronin, 1991, p. 86; Tomlinson, 1993, p. 49). The 1920s and 1930s saw a regressive tax policy, privileging large sections of the Tory electorate, which not even the 1929-1932 economic crisis altered substantially (Cronin, 1991, p. 96).

During the early interwar period, powerful interests – especially the Bank of England and Treasury – sought a return to the Gold Standard as soon as possible (Cronin, 1991, p. 76). Gold Standard was seen as the solution to inflation – partly product of the speculative post-war boom – to remove economic policy from politicians' hands, to restore pre-war parity with US dollar, and halt social unrest and political chaos (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 43). The return to the Gold Standard in 1925 was probably the most important single act of economic policy and the worst mistake of the interwar period; once applied it soon proved impracticable to restore pre-war normality (Pugh, 1994, p. 166). The overvaluation of the currency increased the cost of British exports, making them uncompetitive, harming manufacturers and decreasing wages

(Pugh, 1994, p. 166; Pollard, 1970, p. 3; Reynolds, 1991, p. 106). The abandonment of Gold Standard in 1931 ended with the centrality of the Bank of England as an institution in economic policy vis-à-vis the Treasury (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 82) and removed constraints on domestic policies that allowed governmental economic planning to keep the pound as an attractive currency through low interests rates at least until 1938 (Ibid, p. 102).

World War I brought labour matters into the public agenda, with new status given to the trade unions, the creation of the Ministry of Labour – seeking a conciliatory policy towards organised labour – and the arrival of the first Labour governments (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 57, 64). Surprisingly, the Labour Party's ideology – mostly labourist, rather than socialist – coexisted during the interwar period with the acceptance of financial orthodoxy, which became a deliberate strategy of labour leadership (Ibid). The war brought an expansion in industry, a subsequent 36% increase in trade union membership and the consolidation of union amalgamation, best exemplified with the formation of the AEU (1920) and the TGWU (1924). The TUC – founded in 1868 as a federation and Parliament for the British trade unions – reorganised in 1920 to become more centralised. For that purpose, it created an executive body, the General Council, which became the core of the TUC's decisions and the connection with departments of the state and employers' organisations. The TUC reinforced its approach to the Labour Party – sharing the same headquarters' building, first in Eccleston Square, and from 1928 in Transport House, London. They established the National Joint Committee and administered the Daily Herald from 1922 (Mowat, 1968, p. 19). During the study period, salaries tended to grow – especially compared to the pre-war years. Real wages increased by 11% from 1914 to 1924 and 9-10% throughout the following decade (Ibid, p. 205).

In general terms, in any given year in interwar Britain, between 1 and 3 million workers were unemployed, many of them for long periods. State managers – independently of the political party – approached unemployment as temporary maladjustment that would be

automatically eliminated in the long term by the play of market forces and the re-stabilisation of the world economy (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 60; Pugh, 1994, p. 165; James, 1978, p. 198). Every time the budget experienced a surplus, it was used to pay the national debt and as a good opportunity to reduce taxes, rather than to increase relief for the unemployed (Pugh, 1994, p. 168).

During the interwar year, the Ministry of Labour measured unemployment based on the number of unemployed workers who registered in the books of Unemployment Exchanges to claim benefits. The numbers known are only an approximate representation of the actual number of workless (Garside, 1990, p. 3). During the interwar years, between 1.3 and 3.4 million workers were unemployed, of whom between 1.1 and 2.8 million of them were insured and between 16 and 64 years of age (Ibid, p. 5). Geographical and industrial disparities framed the problem of unemployment: it was concentrated mainly in the north of England, south of Wales, and Scotland, where most of the old staple industries were in decline (Garside, 1990, p. 10; Perry, 2000, p. ix). The most affected sectors were coal, cotton, wool textiles, shipbuilding, iron and steel. The widening gap between the prosperous areas – London, South East and South West – and the most hit remained during the whole period because of the difficulties and risks for unemployed workers to migrate from the north to the south looking for job opportunities (Garside, 1990, pp. 11-12). Long-term unemployment affected those most at risk. The more people remained unemployed, the more difficult it was for them to find a new position. In the 1930s, between 10.7% and 27.1% of the unemployed remained out of work for 12 months or more (Ibid, p. 16).

Unemployment insurance was never capable of covering the scale and duration of unemployment, while it was often refused both by employers and right-wing individuals – because it risked abuse from the unemployed – and by unemployed organisations, because of their inadequacy to solve the problem (Perry, 2000, p. ix). The Insurance Act of 1911 created

a scheme expected to rely on taxes, covering the three main industries, believed to be the most seasonally affected by unemployment: engineering, building and shipbuilding (Mowat, 1968, p. 46). It was extended in 1916, mostly to include munition workers, covering 60% of the workforce. Demobilisation brought to the streets many former servicemen unable to find a place in industry. Out-of-work donation (1919) and uncovenanted benefits (1921) came to aid the exceeded Poor Law, which was insufficient to cover for all the new workless, who disliked it and saw it as a sign of degradation (Perry, 2000, p. 42). By May 1919, some 650, 000 civilians and 360, 000 ex-servicemen were receiving relief from the out-of-work donation and about to exhaust their period of benefit (Mowat, 1968, p. 46; Garside, 1990, p. 36). By 1920, unemployment insurance covered the majority of manual workers over 16 and non-manual workers earning less than £250 a year, leaving out of the scheme people working in agriculture, forestry, horticulture, private domestic service, teachers, nurses, the police, established civil servants, some employed by local authorities, railway workers and in military service (Garside, 1990, p. 4). Since early 1921, the government introduced a pair of tools that progressively applied to more categories of unemployed, to be administered by local Public Assistance Committees (PACs): the means test – which sought to prove the insufficiency of survival for the people living in the same house of an unemployed claimant – and the genuinely-seeking-work clause, which sought to determine a genuine search for a job. Throughout the following two decades, the means test and the need to demonstrate that willingness to accept any reasonable offer of employment to be entitled to receive unemployment relief were an important source of dispute (Perry, 2000, p. 42). In 1921, the means test applied only for poor-relief recipients (Ward, 2013, p. 3). One effect of the introduction of the genuinely-seeking-work clause was that, between 1921 and 1930, 3 million workers lost their unemployed benefit (Peery, 2000, p. 43).

Given the type and dimension of unemployment across Britain, conservative policies towards the problem remained limited, only reaching to offering public works schemes – disliked by the Treasury – industrial transfer and de-rating. With the Industrial Transference Act of 1928, the government managed to transfer over 100, 000 workers between 1928 and 1930, and some 200, 000 from 1932 to 1938, from the most affected areas in the north to more prosperous regions in the south. With the de-rating policy, industry was released of 75% of its rate liability (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 92; Pollard, 1970, p. 112, 114). Unemployment, however, was never a central concern for Conservatives, probably because of its concentration in regions not crucial for Conservative electoral prospects (Pugh, 1994, p. 167) and also because, in Conservatives' mind, the unemployed workers were responsible for their situation for being morally and physically unfit to find employment. Rearmament after 1937 made a substantial contribution to reducing unemployment, which allowed the Treasury to increase borrowing and taxation (Tomlinson, 1993, p. 116). The arrival of the NUWM should be understood in this context.

1.2.- The National Unemployed Workers' Movement

The NUWM is recognised as the most important organisation of the unemployed during the interwar period, without a rival. The only one which, in critical circumstances, in the middle of great conservatism and apathy, did a formidable job to mobilise the workless' discontent (Hayburn, 1970, 1983; Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Perry, 2000; Kingsford, 1982; Hannington, 1977; Croucher, 1987; McShane, 1987). The NUWM carried a tremendous organising effort, setting out to recruit and further the interests of the unemployed, seeking to obtain work or full maintenance for them and to abolish capitalism, as the cause of unemployment and attack on workers' conditions (Penketh & Pratt, 2000, p. 118). Stressing the need for working-class unity and a politics based on the development of socialism from below (Ibid, p. 135), the unemployed

workers' movement showed a remarkable capacity for survival, despite all attempts from outside to destroy it (Walters, 2000, p. 72). Although initially the NUWM was a small and mainly London-based organisation, as unemployment rose the movement grew and created a tradition of extra-parliamentary militancy (Julia Greene, 1986, p. 96) aimed at making unemployed plight visible to the public in a way no parliamentary representation could (Penketh & Pratt, 2000; Hayburn, 1970).

The NUWM was founded in April 1921 at the International Socialist Club, London, as a federation of unemployed committees from across the UK. It continued the protest lead by the Shop Stewards Movement – initiated in the workshops during the war against the trade unions' leadership – and organisations of ex-servicemen who came back from war to find no jobs or sufficient unemployment relief for them. The NUWM's first National Administrative Council was composed of Jack Holt as its chairman, Percy Hay as its secretary and Walter (Wal) Hannington as its national organiser. Nevertheless, it was Wal Hannington who led the NUWM throughout its almost two decades of existence. He was a former shop steward, a skilled tool-maker, a member of the British Socialist Party, interested in Marxist literature and the Russian Revolution, who found in the interests of capitalism the rationale of World War I (Hannington, 1977, p. 1; Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 145).

The NUWM sought through mass agitation in the form of demonstrations, marches and mass meetings to fight for "work or full maintenance at trade union rates for the unemployed workers" (Flanagan, 1991, p. 121). Beyond this emblem, the NUWM revolted against the post-war form of capitalism that condemned many workers to unemployment (Flanagan, 1991, p. 120) and the conservatism of the official labour movement (Hannington, 1977, p. 28). The NUWM demanded of the government a series of rights for the unemployed workers, to develop their mobilisations and preserve their integrity and dignity while out of work. The movement fought against the degradation of the unemployed workers' dignity and demanded the provision

of halls and the right to use public parks for unemployed meetings, its representation on all employment exchange committees, the abolition of overtime to prevent unnecessary unemployment and that the national exchequer provided all the funds needed for unemployment relief (Hannington, 1977, p. 44). More specific demands were added to the NUWM's claims throughout the interwar years; however, the main principle of work or full maintenance and the long-term aim of abolishing capitalism and the transition to socialism remained until the movement vanished during World War II.

Since its beginnings, the NUWM sought a close relationship with the labour and trade union movement to mobilise working-class solidarity in its broadest sense and counteract the claims that the unemployed's protection undermined the standards and conditions of the employed workers. However, the unemployed leaders soon realised the resistance of the leadership of the TUC and the Labour Party to club together with the unemployed (Hannington, 1977, p. 22). The only formal coordinated experience between the NUWM and the TUC in the whole interwar period was the Joint Council on Unemployment from 1923 to 1927 (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 147).

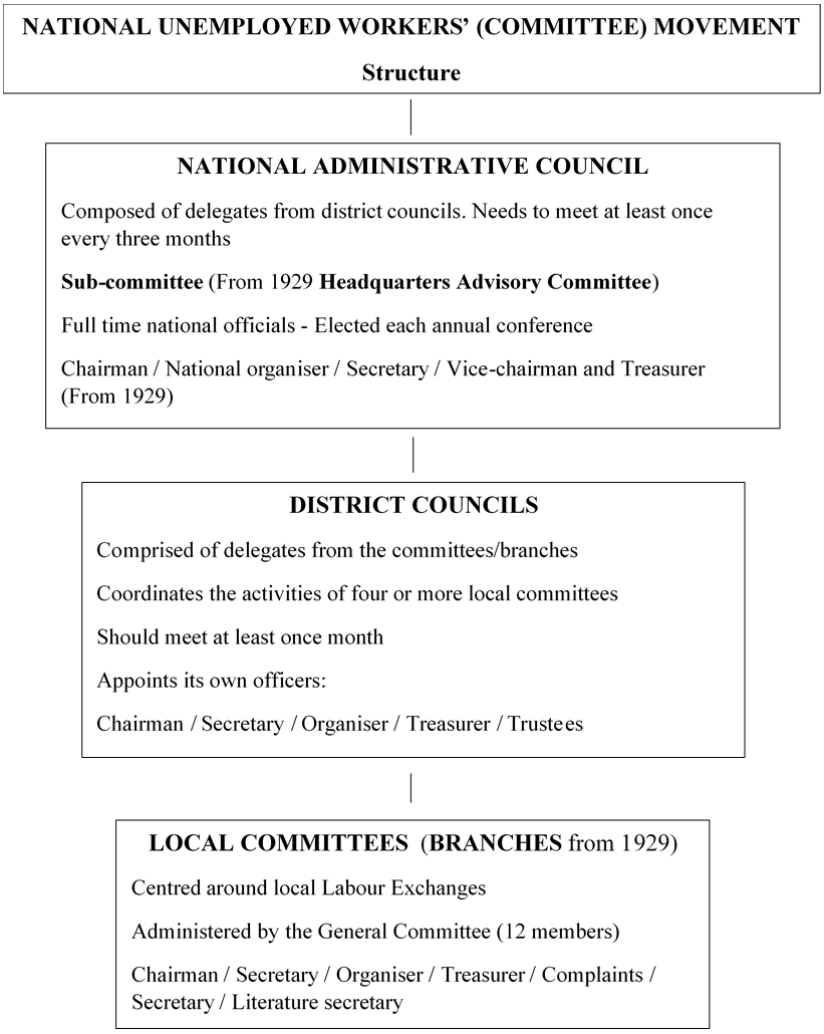
The unemployed workers' movement developed alongside the CPGB. The CPGB was founded in 1920 from a merger of different socialist parties, seeking to unify under its strong hierarchic structure all leftist political organisations not included in the Labour Party. The CPGB soon advanced sophisticated strategies, to guarantee its dominance and authority over all its sympathetic organisations and to split groups that sought to develop independently of its leadership (Flanagan, 1991, p. 127). The unemployed workers' movement coexisted with the Communist Party during the interwar period in a conflictual relationship. Most of the NUWM leadership were, at the same time, members of the CPGB. This was used by the party to manipulate and control the movement, although the latter always resisted. The relationship with

the CPGB proved conflictual in itself and turned out to be the perfect excuse for the government and the labour movement to attack the unemployed workers' movement.

The NUWM had a bureaucratic structure divided into three levels: the National Administrative Council (NAC), District Councils and Local branches. The NAC was constituted of delegates from District Councils who should meet regularly – at least once every three months. It had a sub-committee (Headquarters Advisory Committee from 1929) comprised of the full-time officials elected individually at national conferences (in group from 1929), which was the whole movement's executive body. The three leading positions in the NAC were the chairman, national organiser and secretary. Wal Hannington was the national organiser the entire history of the NUWM. Percy Haye was secretary until 1925. Jack Holt remained chairman until 1925 when he became secretary until 1927. Emrys Llewelyn was secretary of the NUWM from 1927 to 1939. In 1929, the NUWM centralised and strengthened the hierarchy of its apparatus. It removed the word "Committee" from its name, transformed the local committees into branches, and reinforced the authority of its central executive body, the NAC subcommittee, which became the Headquarters Advisory Committee. The movement re-elected Hannington as the national organiser and Emrys Llewelyn as secretary and chose Sid Elias as chairman in 1929, and Tom Mann as Treasurer. They all remained in their posts until 1939. The headquarters of the NUWM occupied 3 Queen Square from 1921 to 1925; 105 Hatton Garden from 1926 to 1929; 23 Great Ormond 1930-1931; 35 Great Russell; 11 White Lion Street 1933-1935; and 144 Holborn 1935-1939.

District Councils gathered representatives from the local committees/branches, which should meet regularly – at least once a month – and appointed its own officials. After consultation with the NAC, District Councils were formed when at least four local committees/branches were in the same area (Harmer, 1987, p. 47, 151). Local committees/branches were located around local Labour Exchanges, and administered by an

elected committee of twelve people, with subcommittees for finance, legal affairs, recruitment, and other activities (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 146). NUWM District Councils coordinated areas composed of four or more local branches (Ibid) and were represented at the NAC.



The NUWM was financed by its paying members, the purchase of pamphlets and aid from the CPGB. The membership' contributions came in two ways: membership cards and stamps. Members paid 2 pence to join and 1 penny a week. Every member received a card when joining and one stamp a week after payment. Cards and stamps were sold by the NAC directly to the local committees/branches for 1s a dozen between 1921 and 1929 and for 1s 6d from 1929 onwards. The NAC sold stamps to the district councils for 1s 4d a hundred from 1921 to 1929

and 2s 8d a hundred from 1929. District councils sold them to the local committees for 3s a hundred from 1921 to 1929, and from 1929 for 4s 4d a hundred (Harmer, 1987, p. 205).

The activities of the NUWM were diverse: written petitions to local and national authorities, deputations requesting to meet representatives of the government, representation of the unemployed workers to claim their benefits at local employment committees, pamphlets and the paper *Out of Work* edited and distributed by its members. Probably the most visible actions of the NUWM were its six hunger marches (1922, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1934, and 1936) (Perry, 2000; Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Ward, 2013; Bagguley, 1991). In the first Hunger March in 1922, 2,000 participants marched to London from all over the country, but once in London, some 70,000 joined the unemployed demonstrations (Flanagan, 1991, p. 156; Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 166). In 1932, 2,000 marched to London, and once there a petition against the means test reached over a million signatures (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 173). Peter Kingsford suggests that in 1936, 1,500 unemployed marched from Scotland, the North of England and Wales to London (Kingsford, 1982, p. 211). More often, there were other, but less impactful demonstrations at the local level that gathered tens of thousands (Hannington, 1977; Flanagan, 1991; Stevenson & Cook, 1979).

The membership of the unemployed workers' movement was fluctuating and its records imprecise and with gaps in periods. Hence, it is hard to provide a precise number of the weekly paying membership of the NUWM throughout its almost two decades of existence. It is possible, however, to have an estimate of entries – new members – and weekly paying members based on the own movement's financial accounts and registers of the CPGB. Sam Davis (1992) suggests that the accounts shown by the NUWM were likely to be influenced by two interests depending on the audience to which they were directed. On the one hand, when they were addressed to branch members, there was a tendency to underestimate the membership numbers to make pressure to redouble the effort to recruit. On the other hand, when the numbers were

shown publicly, there was a tendency to inflate them to highlight the movement's strength (Davis, 1992, p. 29). Harry Harmer (1987) suggests the NUWM received between 20,000 and 60,000 recruits per year between 1923 and 1938 (Harmer, 1987, p. 387). It is unclear for how long these recruits remained paying members, and if they were counted twice because they stopped paying their membership at some point and later joined again. In terms of the weekly paying membership, there is a discrepancy between sources: while the NUWM accounts reported that during 1932 an average of 20,000 members paid their weekly membership (Harmer, 1987, p. 387; Davis, 1992, p. 34), the magazine of the RILU reported that in October 1932 the NUWM had a membership of 50,000 (Flanagan, 1991, p. 180; Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 158). After researching the NUWM's accounts, Davis (1992, p. 35) talks of total recruitment of 460,127 unemployed workers between April 1923 and December 1938. These numbers do not necessarily reflect the numbers of people mobilised by the movement, who were sympathetic to it, who joined in the demonstrations, but who were not paying members.

1.3.- Literature Review

This analysis of the literature on the NUWM aims at explaining the different approaches through which academic scholars have studied the movement since the 1960s and highlight the distinctiveness of this thesis' approach. Most of the accounts on the unemployed workers' movement have been produced by historical scholarship, many in social history or history of popular and working-class mobilisations. These works have provided a robust, detailed reconstruction of the development of the unemployed workers' movement throughout the interwar years and addressed the movement's multiple connections with relevant institutions and organisations, such as the central government, the labour and trade union movement, and the Communist Party. However, these historical accounts lack an explicit theoretical analysis of the distribution and exercise of political power in capitalist societies. They fail to underpin

an understanding of the state and its role in society and industrial relations. They also overlook how labour and business' associations intervene, deliberately or not, to maintain social order and capitalist development. They fail to theorise the emergence of dissident organisations in an already conflictual, contradictory and unsteady relationships. The bulk of literature on the national unemployed workers' movement tend to oversee the complexity of groups' interconnections – as if the different organisations involved in capital accumulation were isolated entities – and to ignore the internal conflicts within them, assuming that organisation's official voice represents that of the whole body.

The main approach to the unemployed workers' movement has focused, on the one hand, on the measurement of its failures and successes, in terms of the short-term realisation of their demands: "work or full maintenance for the unemployed" and the downfall of capitalism. These accounts tend to oversee the power asymmetry that separates a minority dissident group like the NUWM from the interwar British state and the trade union movement seeking to marginalise it, together with the attempts of the Communist Party to control it and use it as a recruiting mechanism. The dominant scholarship on the unemployed workers' movement also tend to ignore an additional difficulty that stood on the way of the NUWM: not only it was a minority group, but also an outsider to the institutionalised system of pressure groups and capitalist production, lacking resources, a permanent and militant membership, institutionalised platforms of protest and genuine allies, to name just some.

On the other hand, the mainstream scholarship has explained the NUWM's relationship to the trade union movement and the state assuming that the NUWM burst into a stable, static, and harmonic normality (structure), as if class struggle was not inherent to, indeed the central aspect of, capitalist society. As Bonefeld (1992) argues, capitalist structures are modes of existence of class antagonism: it is the premise of, and simultaneously the result of, class struggle (Bonefeld, 1992a, p. 93). The accounts of the unemployed workers' movement see the

state as external to class struggle, likewise to society and, as such, explain its attitudes against an unexpected and, almost unjustified, action of the movement.

The two PhD thesis that focus on the NUWM – Ralph Hayburn's *The responses to Unemployment in the 1930s with particular reference to South-East Lancashire* (1970) and Harry Harmer's *The National Unemployed Workers' Movement in Britain 1921-1939: failure and success* (1987) – remain, as most of the literature, an attempt to measure the impact of the activities of the unemployed workers' movement. Ralph Hayburn (1970, 1983) and Harry Harmer (1987) claim that the members of the NUWM joined only seeking the movement's guidance to get unemployment relief and refused to involve politically in the way the movement and the Communist Party expected, remaining politically loyal to the Labour Party and their trade union. These claims ignore the central debate on a movement that did not intend to be a political party, a trade union, or a labour advisory service. The unemployed workers' movement was a disorganised and – at least during the 1920s – decentralised dissident industrial movement, operating outside any social, political and productive structure, without a single and agreed voice, without enough resources and with changing membership.

The literature review has five sections. The first analyses the general writings on the movement, looking at how studies have portrayed the NUWM and pointing particularly at the narrow approach that seeks to measure the movement's successes and failures in terms of the movement's capacity to achieve work or full maintenance for the workless. The second section looks at the literature's records on the relationship between the unemployed workers' movement and the state, where surveillance, infiltration and violence against the NUWM are the main aspects framing such relationship. The third section looks at the scholarship's analysis of the NUWM's difficulties to build a strong relationship with the trade union movement, drawing particularly at the TUC's attitudes towards the unemployed workers' movement. The fourth section gives an account of the views on the relationship between the NUWM and the CPGB,

with particular attention to the discussion on whether the movement was a subsidiary organisation of the CPGB and to what extent the NUWM was able to conduct itself with independence and autonomy. The fifth and last section of the literature review specifies the thesis' contribution and the departure from Middlemas's approach.

1.3.1.- General reflections on the movement

Taking the literature body on the NUWM as a whole, it lacks clarity and consistency about the categorisation of the movement. It is not clear to what extent it is a trade-union-like body, a protest movement or a bureau, which sought to aid the unemployed in the process to obtain unemployment relief. Probably the most sophisticated attempt to categorise the NUWM is provided by Paul Bagguley (1991). He sought to build an understanding of political responses of the unemployed, examining a series of sociological theories and then, providing an analysis of the relationship between the unemployed and the state as the axis of protest; looking specifically at organisational and cultural resources of the collective action of the unemployed (Ibid, p. 36). Bagguley's work focuses on the changing relationship between the unemployed and the state's income maintenance system. He finds that, historically, such movements' primary strategy has been to seek to influence state institutions they have most contact with to guarantee unemployment relief (Ibid, p. 37). He suggests that for unemployed political movements to emerge, there needs to be a series of conditions including temporal and spatial correspondence between the unemployed and the state, particular forms of organisation and alliances, and specific cultural resources on the hands of unemployed mobilisations (Ibid). Additionally, Bagguley assumes that for political movements of the unemployed to emerge, the state needs first to enable them to influence decision-making on levels and forms of unemployment relief. This thesis disputes the claim that such mobilisations can arise only from

dissatisfaction with unemployment, because "unemployment itself provides no clear sense of identity comparable to that of class, occupation or locality" (Bagguley, 1991, p. 70).

Although probably the most explicit and robust analysis on the conditions where unemployed political movements emerge, Bagguley's work fails to address pre-existing conditions of the emergence of the NUWM – the organisation of the rank-and-file in the workshops against the poor union leadership's representation of workers' interests, war-time dilution in industry, and the lack of demobilisation strategies to guarantee jobs to the servicemen who fought in World War I. However crucial in the activities of the NUWM, the movement's strategies to influence institutions of the state to guarantee unemployment relief, in which Bagguley focuses much of his attention, is only one crucial feature of the unemployed workers' movement. Others include articulating a discourse that brought together unemployed and employed workers to fight together as a class; building a platform, along with the trade unions, seeking to reverse the tendencies in industry that were forcing many people to unemployment. The history of the unemployed workers' movement in interwar Britain was not only about obtaining more unemployment relief.

Similar to Bagguley, Perry (2000), Field (2013), and Burnett (1994) sought to distinguish the work of a trade union from that of that a movement of the unemployed – that challenge, for instance, problems like the low level of people's engagement in political action and the difficulties of long term unemployed to be able to engage long term in the movement (Field, 2013, p. 234-235). Field (2013), Flanagan (1991), Croucher (1987), Branson (1985), and Bagguley (1991) all draw on the provision of a sense of belonging, community and solidarity to combat the unemployed workers' stigma. It was an organisation whose essential spirit was that, by fighting, the workless retained their self-respect and dignity as human beings (Croucher, 1987). Joining the unemployed workers' movement meant for many that many others shared their problem. This helped them assert their existence as part of society, build a

culture of class and community solidarity, of common collective interest, where a problem that represented their alienation from society became a temporary reconciliation with the social world (Flanagan, 1991; Bagguley, 1991). The workless would have been infinitely worse had it not been for the persistent struggles organised and led by the NUWM (Hannington, 1977).

Apart from the broad political aims of the NUWM, scholars emphasise the systematic planning and development of mass agitation against unemployment seeking the short-term betterment of the unemployed's condition at the local level. Despite the widespread notion of the hunger marches as the most visible aspect of the movement's activities, its strategies were considerably broader, including forms of protest like written forms, meetings and deputations not associated with the marches (Perry, 2000; Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Ward, 2013; Bagguley, 1991). Among those actions, the best propaganda weapon used by the NUWM to create a mass movement was the ensemble of activities against the means test.[2] The movement openly demanded the abolition of the means test, together with higher unemployment relief and the provision of large-scale public works – while the Labour Party and the TUC only questioned its harsher aspects (Stevenson & Cook, 1979). Although the defence of claims before the Court of Referees, Labour Exchange and Public Assistance Committees was an essential part of the practical day-to-day work of the NUWM, it was not its main work (Bagguley, 1991).

Harry Harmer (1987) talks about a dual existence of the movement: a political façade – not genuinely political in its ultimate goals – erected by the leaders and, behind this, the reality of a mainly local movement, reformist rather than revolutionary (Ibid, p. 377). Harmer acknowledges that the movement intended to politicise the unemployed, to bridge the Communist Party with a section of the working class, to draw them into a united struggle with

[2] The household means test was a policy tool used to determine the need for unemployment relief for the long-term unemployed, that considered both commodities and income of all those living at the same house of a relief applicant, until 1935 administered by Public Assistance Committees. During the 1920s was implemented only for poor relief and public assistance applicants, but from November 1931 was implemented for all long-term unemployed insured, or previously insured, applicants (Ward, 2013, p. 4). For further references see Ward (2013).

those in work against capitalism and the state, as the main agents responsible for their plight and to recognise the need to revolutionary socialism. Furthermore, probably the leaders were more interested in influencing the trade unions – to increase union members' militancy – than in the unemployed themselves (Harmer, 1987, p. 2). Despite the NUWM's objectives, the mass of the membership took little interest in their political struggle. The movement failed to bring sufficient workless onto the streets (Shaw, 1979; Hayburn, 1983). Those who joined the NUWM did so only to achieve individual benefits from the appeals advice to get unemployment relief (Harmer, 1987), seeing the movement as a trade union; an advice agency, an organisation to turn for specific and narrow benefits (Branson, 1985; Flanagan, 1991 Stevenson & Cook, 1979). Paradoxically, the NUWM gained most of its strength out of its advice service, a contradiction at the core of its overall strategy because the short-term aid of the unemployed was only the basis of recruitment for a more significant political cause, which ended up being completely irrelevant (William Walters, 2000; Ewing & Gearty, 2001; James Harmer, 1987).

As part of the efforts to measure the NUWM's failures and successes, some authors have sought to clarify the extent to which the credit for achieving more and higher rates of benefits for the unemployed belongs to the NUWM's actions. For example, Shaw (1979) and Stevenson & Cook (1979) claim that some of the credit should be given to the TUC for its particular interest in unemployment benefits. Furthermore, they called attention to the fact that the movement failed to bring about an end to the means test, to improve the large-scale issues of unemployment relief (Stevenson & Cook, 1979) and, overall, to pose a threat to public order or the economic system (Harmer, 1987).

The literature highlights two main difficulties the NUWM faced throughout its existence: its floating membership and its limited finance. In terms of the former, accounts refer that, except in the distressed areas, the NUWM had a floating membership since most of

its members would drop out as soon as they found a new job (Branson, 1985, p. 76). There are strong disagreements in terms of a precise membership figure. This is difficult to clarify, because the movement had an imprecise count of its membership, partly due to the changing membership, challenging to systematise and update across the UK and because it sought compliance vis-a-vis the Red International of Labour Unions. Whatever figure, it remains statistical approximates rather than accurate census' numbers. Flanagan (1991) recognised Hannington's claim that while many joined the movement paying the front fees, only executive members of local branches regularly paid the weekly membership (Ibid, p. 179).

Whatever the figure, as the Pilgrim Trust concluded, the majority of those unemployed who spoke about the NUWM valued it. Moreover, no membership statistics can explain the tens of thousands of unemployed the NUWM could on occasion mobilise in industrial centres throughout Britain (Flanagan, 1991, p. 180). Probably we should not judge the NUWM solely in terms of its membership figures, as they show only those who were able to pay their dues and ignored the numbers, passively sympathetic or actively drawn into the movement's agitation (Perry, 2000). The literature agrees that NUWM's income came from membership fees but, crucially, from street collections and sale of pamphlets (Branson, 1985; Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Bagguley, 1991). Noreen Branson (1985) highlights that, despite the little amount that membership fees represented to the overall movement's budget, considering the difficulties for jobless workers to find resources to pay while out of work, for them, paying the dues was a matter of self-respect.

Besides the logical differentiation of areas where the unemployed workers' movement had more support because of the high level of unemployment, there were other factors involved that played a role in determining the acceptance of the movement to lead the unemployed in certain areas. Factors like militant tradition appear to be essential in the explanation of popular support for the unemployed agitation. This was the case of the craft and engineering centres of

Scotland, Lancashire, the Midlands and London; regions where support for the NUWM was primarily concentrated (Stevenson & Cook, 1979). Paul Bagguley (1991) explains that the highly localised and geographically uneven character of the NUWM depended on the notion of a localistic symbolic community articulated around particular kinds of socialist politics, a conjuncture of resources, like transformative class-consciousness and critical transformative beliefs.

The women's role in the NUWM and the members' attitudes and leadership towards them is an aspect of the movement's history also explored by the literature. There is a general feeling that the NUWM's leadership often ignored women's situation while out of work (John Field, 2013; Richard Flanagan, 1991; Paul Bagguley, 1991; Hayburn, 1970). Richard Flanagan (1991) highlights that unemployed ex-servicemen were inconsistent and contradictory in their reaction against unemployment. At times, they blamed those employed workers for the jobless situation (Ibid, p. 114). This sometimes derived in racist and sexist explanations – where the reinforcement of masculinity of the unemployed played a crucial role – which coexisted with revolutionary sentiments (Ibid). Women's position within the unemployed workers' movement was limited, not only because of the segregation but, by the amount of domestic work they were expected to undertake; whether in work or out of it. When active in the movement, women's role was ambiguous; they were used sometimes to render the police breaking up demonstrations more difficult. Although the NUWM campaigned against women's state-decreed exploitation, women's mass participation was not reflected in the composition of the movement's leadership, which tended to be male-dominated (Flanagan, 1991; Bagguley, 1991). Bagguley (1991) draws on the two main ways women were involved in the NUWM's activities. On the one hand, they were active in a marginalised fashion – sometimes supporting the male members of their family, sometimes without having any distinctive connection. On the other hand, as members of the autonomous, and distinctively non-communist women's sections,

despite their organisational autonomy from the different sections of the movement, they were subordinated to the broader organisation's aims and activities.

So far, we have explored how the literature has sought to picture the NUWM. The emphasis resides in the degree of success the movement achieved in providing relief to the unemployed, the benefits that the unemployed could receive from joining, the classification of the movement's activities, the measurement of its membership and its funds, the geographical differentiation in the mobilisation of the unemployed, and the capacity of women's integration in the movement. However, the literature fails to explain the role the movement plays as a dissident organisation, an outsider to the recognised set of pressure groups – the labour and trade union movement – and its place on the broader complex configuration of social formations involved in relations of production. The next section revises how the literature approaches the state's attitudes towards the NUWM.

1.3.2.- State responses to the NUWM

Regarding the relationship between the unemployed workers' movement and the state, the literature draws on: the degree of violence adopted by the movement in its mobilisations (Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Flanagan, 1991; Ewing & Gearty, 2001); the state's hostility against the movement (Perry 2000; Greene, 1986; Bagguley, 1991; Ward, 2013; Hayburn, 1970 Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Flanagan, 1991; Penketh & Pratt, 2000; Ewing & Gearty, 2001; Shaw, 1979); the level of the state's worries of a real threat presented by the NUWM's activities to social order (Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Penketh & Pratt, 2000; Ward, 2013; Worley, 2000; Ewin & Gearty, 2001); the evidence of infiltration and close surveillance by the authorities to the movement (Harmer, 1987; Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Ewing & Gearty, 2001; Shaw, 1979; Hayburn, 1970; Penketh & Pratt, 2000); the government's use of the press against the

movement (Harmer, 1987; Stevenson & Cook, 1979); and the use of unemployment relief to counteract the NUWM (Bagguley, 1991; Harmer, 1987).

A generalised view is that the NUWM made its achievements in the face of very adverse conditions, particularly the state's hostility towards them (Perry 2000; Greene, 1986; Bagguley, 1991; Ward, 2013; Hayburn, 1970 Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Flanagan, 1991; Penketh & Pratt, 2000; Ewing & Gearty, 2001; Shaw, 1979, p. 321). Marches faced close police scrutiny, a police force with greater powers (Penketh & Pratt, 2000, p. 135), that found various ways to obstruct the movement's activities and tended to react over-vigorously when dealing with demonstrations (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 190). Wal Hannington and Peter Kingsford emphasised the government's severity on the administration of unemployment relief, the hostility and sometimes brutality of the police against NUWM's demonstrators, the treatment of marchers as vagrants, which often meant the confiscation of all their possessions and the imposition of tasks (Kingsford, 1982; Hannington, 1977). Unlike the unemployed who marched behind the banners of the trade unions and the Labour Party, those who did under the banner of the NUWM were singled out for the excesses of police control and discrimination, clearly directed against the left-wing organisations (Ward, 2013, p. 117; Hayburn, 1970, p. 553). The Ministries of Health and Labour, together with the Home Office and the Scotland Yard coordinated against the hunger marches (Perry, 2000, p. 120; Harmer, 1987, p. 255). The Ministry of Health sought to enforce casual regulations upon marchers who stayed the night in workhouses giving them the most basic services offered to vagrants. At the same time, the Ministry of Labour, responsible for unemployment insurance, instructed not to allow unemployment relief to marchers, because they were unavailable for signing-on at Local Exchanges (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 218; Shaw, 1979, p. 321). The local authorities did not always follow the national authorities' instructions in the administration of unemployment

relief, claiming that they confronted a very different set of political dynamics than national officials (Greene, 1986, p. 96).

In terms of the state's capacity to infiltrate and track the NUWM's activities, the literature recognises that the movement was permanently under close scrutiny from the police (Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Penketh & Pratt, 2000; Ewing & Gearty, 2001; Greene, 1986; Harmer, 1987; Shaw, 1979; Hayburn, 1970). The Special branch placed an informant at the highest level of the movement apparatus (Greene, 1986, 96), who supplied information to Scotland Yard (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 225). However, the data was only of secondary importance (Hayburn, 1970, p. 572). The state's action against the movement made Ewing and Gearty conclude that:

> "*The values of liberty and freedom to which many senior figures in British politics and law declared themselves genuinely committed during this period seem to have had no connection whatsoever in their own minds with the clamping down on the civil liberties of members of the CPGB and the NUWM in which so many of them were at exactly the same time so actively involved*" (Ewing & Gearty, 2001, p. 272).

On the other hand, some authors suggest the actual outbreak of violence, in almost every instance, is shrouded in confusion, making it virtually impossible to make sound judgements. The NUWM naturally blamed the police for interfering with peaceful demonstrations, however, there was no interference with the rights of freedom of speech and liberty of the speakers (Hayburn, 1970, p. 565). Many of the disturbances occurred because NUWM demonstrators insisted on marching in defiance of police orders (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 229). It should not be disturbing that the police sergeants and constables took notes of political speeches (Hayburn, 1970, p. 565) if we consider that the police were concerned to preserve public order, whichever group was causing disruption (Stevenson & Cook, 1979).

This discussion leads us to reflect on the extent to which the state perceived the NUWM's development as a threat to social order during the interwar period. In the literature, it is common to find the assertion that the state did see the NUWM as a threat (Ward, 2013; Shaw, 1979, p. 321; Worley, 2000; Penketh & Pratt, 2000; Stevenson and Cook, 1979). The development of the Incitement to Disaffection Act 1934 and Public Order Act 1936 can be seen as government's attempts to "assert its control over the threat from extra-parliamentary movements and to preserve its authority in the face of possible civil disorder" (Stevenson and Cook, 1979, p. 218). Despite that both Acts infringed individual liberty, they were seen as necessary to contain the challenge posed by the NUWM; they were the manifestation of the government's insecurity (Ibid). However, while the state might have considered the NUWM's rhetoric as a potential danger, the movement's weakness ensured that the threat remained small; the government may have found the marches an irritating and sometimes even an embarrassing spectacle, but nothing more than that (Harmer, 1987, pp. 380-381).

The perception of threat from the NUWM within the state was not necessarily homogeneous (Harmer, 1987). Members of Parliament and ministers would view the activities of the NUWM with a different level of concern. The director of Intelligence had the most extreme view although, despite the special branch and MI5's alarming reports, ministers, who were provided with alternative information and probably more aware of Movement's fundamental weakness, proved to be less alarmed; for this reason, they could confidently refuse NUWM's demands. However, portraying the movement as a sinister and violent organisation was advantageous for ministers, by influencing public opinion against the movement (Ibid, p. 50, 384). Nevertheless, the government's perception did not remain the same during the two decades of existence of the movement.

The accounts of the state's responses to the NUWM focus on the severity of the coercive apparatus against the movement, the extent to which the government saw it as a threat, and the

discussion about the adequacy of infiltration and surveillance. With a significant level of detail, the literature records the action of the state against the movement. Nevertheless, these accounts do not see these state actions as part of a comprehensive response to class struggle. The picture of the action of the state against the NUWM needs to be analysed on a broader sense, that includes, for instance, an understanding of the role that trade unions – and other organisations like business' associations – play in helping the state to guarantee social order to ensure exchange. An analysis on the state's responses to the NUWM would need to explore why the state responded fiercely to a political movement that, despite its references to revolution, was not organising violent actions, was financially weak, and composed of unemployed workers seeking work or adequate relief.

The next section looks at the literature's approaches to the relationship between the labour movement and the NUWM. It tracks the main works that have studied the unemployed workers' movements, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, and clarifies this thesis's contribution and distinctiveness.

1.3.3.- The labour movement's attitudes towards the NUWM

Previous studies see the relationship between the labour movement and the NUWM in terms of the hostile attitudes the TUC leadership showed to the unemployed workers' movement and, the little progress achieved in terms of collaborating to represent the unemployed workers and provide them with relief (Hayburn, 1970 &1983; Shaw, 1979; Flanagan, 1991; Perry, 2000; Greene, 1986; Jupp, 1982; Reiss, 2008). The interwar official labour movement was, at the very least, slow to act on behalf of the unemployed. A large body of unemployed workers eagerly waited for a sign of sympathy from their elected labour leaders that never came (Hayburn, 1983, p. 294). Despite the NUWM's calls for support, the TUC imposed an almost impregnable barrier between itself and the NUWM, avoided the unemployed militancy and

agitation and, even denied that the movement represented the unemployed (Shaw, 1979, p. 307). But in the labour movement it was not only the TUC leadership who resisted to work together with the NUWM. The Labour Party was also opposed to integrating the unemployed workers' movement into the labour movement, probably because, for the party, NUWM's politics represented a form of dissent difficult to control and an obstacle to its moderate parliamentary aspirations. The Labour Party perceived a threat from the politics of the unemployed movement, not only against Parliamentary Democracy, but also against the party itself (Jupp, 1982, p. 27), and ignored the unemployed workers' movement ultimately because of its communist links (Perry, 2000, p. 98). Not only was the Labour Party electorally inclined to do little for the unemployed, but it was also intellectually unable to offer any real solution. The interwar Labour Party focused on preserving the principles of sound finance – the orthodoxy in seeking a revival of international trade as the only solution to unemployment's continuing problem (Flanagan, 1991, p. 145).

Stephen Shaw (1979) sought to explain the reasons behind the TUC's disdain for the NUWM. He suggests that there were both economic and political reasons for this (Ibid, p. 307). On the one hand, to protect wages, it was essential to avoid the unemployed to blackleg nor accept jobs at less than the recognised rate. Ironically, it was the unemployed movement's commitment to preventing blacklegging and undercutting, always placing upward pressure on benefits, which eventually made it unnecessary for the TUC to collaborate, or even care about, the unemployed and the movement (Ibid). The TUC found no industrial motivation to cooperate with the movement, as unemployment did not pose a threat to trade unionism and trade union standards (Ibid, p. 325).

On the other hand, the TUC had the political objective to ensure that the majority of the working-class remained faithful to the Labour Party; the links of the NUWM with the Communist Party were incompatible with its primary political task (Shaw, 1979). For Shaw,

the TUC's resistance to supporting the NUWM's activities demonstrated a disdain for the politics of street protest, that far from benefiting the labour movement, would bring problems with the police (Shaw, 1979, p. 322). Reiss (2008) pays attention to individual trade unions' expressions against the TUC's attitudes against the NUWM and the TUC's use of its privileged position and monopoly of information, to disguise trade unions and trade council's sympathy to the NUWM's mobilisations to prevent local activists from supporting unauthorised unemployed activities in the future (Ibid, p. 90).

Regarding the short-lived experience of the Joint Advisory Committee between the NUWM and the TUC, the literature tends to focus on the little advance produced on concrete actions on behalf of the unemployed. The meetings consisted mainly of fruitless efforts by the NUWM representatives to persuade the General Council to change its mind, seeking the left's permanent strengthening. The NUWM could not affiliate with the TUC because the General Council considered that the unemployed should remain at their unions, instead of moving to another organisation (Perry, 2000, p. 120). After all, the NUWM's intentions in the JAC were only to encourage the spread of disillusionment and to persuade trade unions to go on to take a more militant position (Harmer, 1987, p. 96). The trade unions were not convinced that cooperation with the NUWM would increase their membership (Shaw, 1979, p. 316). This opportunity provided the NUWM with some sort of entrance into the official labour movement, however tenuous and short-lived, partly because the TUC managed to neutralise the NUWM's operation (Harmer, 1987, p. 111).

Various studies see the TUC's unemployed associations as an effort of the General Council to undermine unemployed workers' support to the NUWM (Shaw, 1979, p. 325; Perry, 2000, p. 99). There was little interest on the part of the TUC to work on behalf of the unemployed. Their unemployed associations amounted to mainly recreational centres for support and socialising to represent claimants without any involvement in agitation or self-help

work. The TUC's unemployed associations remained smaller and less influential than the NUWM (Shaw, 1979, p. 329; Hayburn, 1983, p. 281); though never a serious challenge to the leadership of the unemployed workers' movement, they nevertheless had a splitting effect (Trory, 1974, p. 29).

Previous studies on the NUWM tracked in detail the relationship between the labour movement and the unemployed workers' movement. They acknowledged the TUC General Council's hostile attitudes towards the NUWM and the latter's struggles to approach to the former to cooperate on behalf of the unemployed. The exploration of the TUC's motives to refuse to work together with the NUWM, has delivered answers that remain at a low level of sophistication. They do not see beyond the TUC's interest to remain at the head of the labour movement's leadership, to protect employed workers' wages or the aversion to the Communist Party. There needs to be re-assessment of the TUC's attitudes, in its relation to the NUWM, examining the role the trade union movement played in the institutional arrangement of the interwar period.

The next section revises the approaches to the links between the NUWM and the Communist Party.

1.3.4.- The NUWM and the Communist Party of Great Britain

The literature draws on the extent to which the Communist Party controlled the NUWM and the party's criticisms against the movement's deviation from the communist political aim, in favour of the technical help on behalf of the unemployed workers. There is a broad agreement among the literature that the CPGB's influence affected the development of the NUWM (Field, 2013; Branson, 1985; Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Klugmann, 1968; Flanagan, 1991; Jupp, 1982; Burnett, 1994; Hinton, 1983; Perry, 2000; Worley, 2000; Campbell & McIlroy, 2008; Greene, 1986; Harmer, 1987; Hayburn, 1970 & 1983). Some would suggest that the movement's

autonomy was limited (Burnett, 1994; Campbell & McIlroy, 2008; and Harmer, 1987), while others consider that the movement was able to operate with an important degree of freedom from the party's command (Field, 2013; Klugmann, 1968; Greene, 1986; and Hayburn, 1970 & 1983).

The bulk of the literature agrees on the importance to distinguish the intermittent interest of the CPGB on the NUWM (Campbell and McIlroy, 2008, p. 63) and, to differentiate the early stages of the Communist Party during the 1920s from its later development, during the 1930s (Richard Flanagan, 1991). For example, the CPGB displaced its attention from the NUWM to the Minority Movement seeking to operate inside trade unions, to promote a more militant trade union policy and become an integral part of the trade union machinery (Worley, 2002, p. 6; see also Martin, 1969; Campbell and McIlroy, 2008, p. 66). However, when unemployment was higher, the party strengthened its control over the NUWM (Field, 2013, p. 290).

Authors like Stevenson and Cook (1979) identify NUWM's willingness to follow the CPGB's line, even if that meant to lose part of the movement's identity (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, p. 149). Campbell & McIlroy (2008) consider it naïve to underestimate the CPGB's capacity of control over its auxiliary organisations. The CPGB's manoeuvres to go unnoticed from police gaze, hide its plans to secure control over the NUWM and to make the movement's activities to follow the Stalinist policy (Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, p. 83). The NUWM's leaders' stance, thrust and rhetoric derived from the political line of the Communist Party (Harmer, 1987, p. 8); they acted at any time in conformity with the party's discipline and instructions and coordinated their activities under the guidance of the party (Ibid, p. 65). The NUWM's development depended upon the strength of the party and the party leadership's judgement of what was the priority to attend (Ibid, 119), so there should be little doubt that, at least at the national level, the CPGB exerted a good deal of influence over the affairs of the

NUWM (Field 2013, p. 290). After all, the NUWM remained under the party's ideological control simply because its activists, locally and nationally, were communists (Campbell & McIlroy, 2018).

Despite the CPGB's capacity of control over the NUWM – and the movement willingness to follow the Moscow line – the movement's membership managed to prevent the party's ambition to use the movement as its instrument and forced Hannington to work on their behalf (Harmer, 1987, p. 14). Campbell and McIlroy (2008) concluded that the control of the leadership of the NUWM and the party over the movement's membership, was always incomplete (Ibid, p. 63). Although the NUWM national leadership sought to convince its members to accept and understand the revolutionary politics in line with the party, only a few unemployed workers who joined the NUWM were willing to follow the movement's strategy to politicise them (Hayburn, 1970, p. 378).

Some authors suggest that the movement possessed a degree of autonomy and independence that explains why the party frequently criticised the movement's focus on the legal aid for the unemployed, as it made them overlook the formation of the disciplined army of the unemployed that the party sought to create. Even authors that developed long arguments trying to demonstrate the party's domination over the NUWM, recognised after all, that the movement was not a communist organisation that it possessed some degree of autonomy (Stevenson & Cook, 1979, 147; Hayburn, 1970, p. 352) and that, within certain limits, managed to develop a policy that was at odds with the instructions of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (Perry, 2000, p. 116; Worley, 2000, p. 375). The fact that the unemployed movement was under communist and militant leadership did not mean that the party attempted to monopolise it (Klugmann, 1968, p. 120). While the CPGB liked to think it exercised more or less complete control over the unemployed movement's affairs, the NUWM was always able to retain a fair degree of independence (Flanagan, 1991, p. 178).

Unlike the NMM, the unemployed workers' movement was never formally committed to the party in any way. Nevertheless, at times, its leadership was subjected to communist pressures (Hayburn, 1970, p. 290). While the CPGB was a crucial element in the unemployed politics, they were a much broader phenomenon during the interwar period than party politics. The movement enjoyed a mass legitimacy that the CPGB never rivalled (Flanagan, 1991, p. 178), with a much more successful organisational capacity than the party, which reached a much wider audience (Jupp, 1982, p. 25). Richard Flanagan (1991) talks of a paradox in this symbiotic relationship: while the NUWM showed a public persona of a genuinely correct Communist organisation, it was in practise a dynamic movement, capable of responding in infinitely subtle ways to the requirements of the unemployed and to innovate in forgoing a radical politics, that went far beyond the narrow strictures of Stalinist ideology in its consistency, programs and analysis of the state (Ibid, p. 179). Flanagan sees the unemployed workers' movement as a juncture between a broad radical working-class activism of a long, honourable tradition, with the far narrower world of the disciplined radical Communist Party (Ibid). John Field (2013) recognises that, without dismissing the party's sectarianism's adverse effects on the unemployed workers' movement, the latter managed to maintain a firm hand hold over its organisation and policies (Ibid, p. 223). He highlights that, rather than the party binding the movement's hands, a weak and isolated CPGB depended on the NUWM to carry its political line and even depended on it for its existence. The NUWM was to play the role of the CPGB to cover the party's own political failures; it was only through the NUWM, however disappointing its outcomes in terms of membership, that the party had any claim to a political identity at all (Ibid, p. 221). However, some recognise that the CPGB's network of sympathisers did allow the NUWM to survive through the ups and downs of unemployed struggles (Perry, 2000, p. 118). This group of authors, who recognise a degree of autonomy in the unemployed workers' movement from the CPGB, gives Wal Hannington some credit in impeding the party

to control the movement altogether. Hannington used his considerable abilities to defend the NUWM against the tendency of the CPGB to transform it entirely into an appendage (Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, p. 84), sometimes at the cost of his own position (Field, 2013, p. 222). He fiercely resisted the proposals emanating from the Comintern (Branson, 1985, p. 79), an organisation that never managed to subjugate him (Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, p. 84).

The links between the NUWM and the CPGB have been assessed, in different degrees, by most of the studies that explore the unemployed workers' movement. The messy cataloguing of the Communist Party archives in the UK and the difficulties of access to archives in Russia have left this side of the analysis less developed. The work of Campbell and McIlroy (2008 and 2018) in exploring the nexus between the NUWM and the Communist Party and the capacity of the latter's infiltration in the Labour Party are probably the most advanced studies in the matter. Their research focuses on the period 1921-1924 and mainly 1929-1936. More attention needs to be brought to the periods not covered by their work and determine the extent to which the links of the Communist Party and the NUWM represented an impediment in the latter's search for an alliance with the trade union movement and a genuine concern for the government.

1.3.5.- Distinctiveness and Contribution

The existing literature has approached the NUWM by mainly focusing on the measurement of its successes and failures and the dichotomy between its long-term political aims and its day-to-day local work to provide relief to the unemployed workers (See Hayburn, 1970, 1983; Harmer, 1987; Stevenson & Cook, 1979; Shaw, 1979). Based on robust investigations, supported by in-depth archival research, previous studies on the NUWM address its relationship to the state and the trade union movement without a sophisticated analysis of the institutional arrangement the unemployed workers' movement came to disrupt and how this

disruption altered the distribution and exercise of power of industrial relations in interwar Britain. The research on the links of the NUWM with the CPGB has achieved an outstanding level of detail in explaining the capacity of control of the party over the movement. Nevertheless, they have disregarded inquiring into how this relationship changed the movement's capacity to relate to the state and the trade unions. In short, the existing literature has failed to integrate all the dimensions of the balance of power in the complex relations where the NUWM, the state, the trade unions, and, to a lesser extent, the Communist Party were involved.

The main gaps in the literature on the NUWM are:

- A lack of clarity and consistency about the categorisation of the NUWM.
- A failure to explain the role played by the NUWM as a dissident organisation inside the complex configuration of social formations involved in relations of production.
- An inadequate explanation about the rationale of state action against the NUWM.
- A deficient explanation about the TUC role in the management of industrial discontent during the interwar years.
- An insufficient account of the impact of the NUWM's relationship with the CPGB in the movement's capacity to relate to the state and the trade unions.
- An absence of an explicit theoretical position regarding the distribution and exercise of power in capitalist societies that explain the role played by the state and trade unionism.

This thesis addresses that dimension overlooked by the existing literature and builds an explanation underpinned on a Marxist theory of the state and industrial relations, that understands the emergence of the NUWM in an already existing accord between the state, the

trade union movement and business' associations. While previous studies have been unable to explain the rationale of interconnected responses to the unemployed workers' movement and have treated each dimension separately, following a dichotomic logic, this work frames such responses in a dialectic of interactions, characteristic of the social relations of production and class struggle. Based on a rigorous and extensive empirical analysis, this research contributes with a novel perspective that sees the mobilisations of the NUWM disrupting a fetishised form of conflictual social relations that appeared as detached strategies, inside a harmonic and stable course. Such view allows this research to explain the internal conflicts in the trade union movement and the state apparatus, regarding the treatment to the unemployed workers' movement not as disconnected and contingent events, but as expressions of conflictual, unstable, and unpredictable social relations.

Instead of explaining the relevance of the NUWM in terms of the extent to which it met its goals – the integration of the unemployed in the organisation and the state provision of work or full maintenance for the workless – this work focuses on the degree and nature of the response of state managers to mediate in industrial conflict and the accommodative practices of the trade union movement to enhance its own power. We need to explain the logic of the disproportionate reaction of the state using its coercive apparatus, usually reserved for emergency times and, the trade union movement with a high degree of animosity against a political organisation seeking to organise the working class and requesting the development of welfare that covered the unemployed workers. This is important because it sheds light on the state's capacity to manage industrial discontent in exceptional circumstances – mass and long term unemployment, constant problems of balance of payments, industrial unrest, and international conflict – in cooperation with the trade union movement's leadership. When the state faces the challenge of a newly organised group – the unemployed in this case – that disrupts the tentative stability of industrial conflict in a given time, the state can draw upon the

trade unions to build together a series of strategies that legitimise each other's role in the administration of discontent. One the one hand, the state demonstrates its willingness to compromise towards labour's rights – for instance, the increase of wages – and its capacity to recognise labour's representatives. On the other hand, the trade unions demonstrate compromise with discipline and order towards industrial prosperity and its capacity to deliver better subsistence means to employed – workers.

This thesis also contributes clarifying the role of the industrial talks – between TUC's representatives and business' federations and facilitated by the state – in changing the state's view on the trade union movement's potential to help the state guaranteeing social order. This is important because previous studies have not paid sufficient attention to the relevance of the Mond Group intervention between 1927 and 1928 in integrating the labour side into the efforts towards industrial prosperity. The 1927 Trades Disputes and Trades Unions Act sought to disqualify the trade union's legitimacy in Britain's system of industrial relations. The intervention of Alfred Mond to integrate the trade union's leadership into high-level conversations with business' representatives facilitated by the state was successful in overlooking the Act in practice and legitimising the trade unions in the state's view. This strategy was also beneficial for the state to legitimise its actions against the unemployed workers' movement: if the state was in close cooperation with the trade union movement it could not be claimed that it was operating against labour's rights and the action against the NUWM was to be seen as the safeguarding of the rule of law and national interests.

This work also contributes to the empirical analysis of the state responses to the NUWM locating the use of the intelligence services and the police against the movement's members and especially its leadership as part of a systematic practice of surveillance, infiltration and harassment against communist activists since World War I. This counteracts explanations that

suggest that the police's use against NUWM's mobilisations derived from genuine concerns about the disturbance of public order.

Lastly, this research advances Keith Middlemas's corporate bias thesis using the case of the NUWM to examine the extent to which it is a suitable explanation of the development of the capacity for state intervention in industrial conflict in seeking governability and social order on behalf of capitalist exchange during the interwar years in Britain. The examination suggests that Middlemas's theory is a suitable explanation, however, it overstates the institutional growth achieved by the trade unions and their capacity to intermediate with central government. Middlemas's work also underestimates the level of institutional violence exerted by the state. While Middlemas recognises the development of the coercive apparatus reinforced by the 1934 Incitement to Disaffection Act and the 1936 Public Order Act and the use of new and permanent police powers against the hunger marchers, he highlights the lack of open hostility between government and public and overall respect to the established conventions about civil liberties (Middlemas, 1979, p. 242) and appears to lessen the stress on the level of violence excreted by the state against the NUWM's members highlighted by Ewing and Gearty (2001) and testified by recently open files held by the National Archives (HO 144/19197; HO 144/22581; HO 144/22582; KV 2/4227; KV 2/4225; KV 2/4226; DPP 2/121; KV 4/297; MEPO 38/45).

2.- Theoretical framework: Open Marxist theories of the state and the Revolutionary School of Industrial Relations

The previous chapter located the NUWM in the historical context of the interwar years in Britain, provided an overview of the movement's structure and development, and critically revisited the existing literature on the unemployed workers' movement. It highlighted the distinctiveness and contributions of this research. It also identified the failure of the existing accounts on the NUWM to provide an explicit theoretical stand on the state and industrial relations, on the distribution and exercise of power, on the role that labour organisations can play in the governing process, on the emergence of dissident organisations and on the conflictual relations of production in capitalist societies.

This chapter provides a theoretical framework that guides the thesis, an explicit abstract analysis of the distribution of power in capitalist societies, and the role of the state, labour organisations, and the NUWM as an industrial, political organisation. It categorises the identity of the NUWM, defines the position regarding Keith Middlemas's theoretical insights, and addresses the theories on industrial relations and the state that inform the analysis of the responses of the interwar British state towards industrial discontent and the NUWM. It criticises pluralistic theories of industrial relations and deterministic, instrumental and functionalist accounts of the state. Instead, this framework highlights the asymmetrical, conflictual, changing, and therefore unexpected and open capitalist social relations of production.

This thesis mainly focuses on the theory developed by Richard Hyman regarding industrial relations and trade unionism. Hyman, sharing interpretations with the revolutionary school in industrial relations, criticised orthodox theories and focused his analysis on informal workplace struggles and organisations during the second decade of the twentieth century (Aris, 1998, pp. 1-2).

About the theory of the state, this chapter addresses the theoretical analysis provided by Open Marxist accounts and members of the Conference of Socialist Economists. This tradition seeks to counteract orthodox political science analyses and Marxist accounts of the state, by offering a review of Marx's *Capital* and the *Grundrisse*, bringing to the centre of the debate the concepts of class, capital and the state, and locating the latter as a mode of existence of the social relations of production, and whose analysis must derive from an understanding of the circuit of capital (Burnham, 2001, p. 103).

This chapter addresses the notion of the *national interest*, crucial for understanding the rationale for the state's action. It is common to find a defence of the conception of the national or general interest to justify governing strategies on its behalf, sacrifices on its name, and the state's action against groups – called extremists – who oppose such interest and pursue their particular goals. However, the general interest is a mere abstraction; what exists is "a particular resolution of conflicting interests, the result of a particular resolution of the conflicts between particular capitals and of the contradiction between capital and the working class" (Clarke, 1991a, p. 185).

The chapter is broadly divided into four sections. The first section attempts to categorise the NUWM as a political, industrial organisation. The second outlines Keith Middlemas' insights on corporate bias. The third addresses pluralist accounts on industrial relations, Richard Hyman's criticisms of the Pluralist school and outlines Hyman's approach to industrial relations and trade unionism. The fourth section provides a simplified overview of the circuit of capital, class struggle and crisis, followed by an outline of the state's form and the apparatus.

2.1. - The NUWM's identity

Surprisingly, previous research on the NUWM has not attempted to categorise the movement and locate its emergence within a broader industrial relations system and discontent

management next to the state and trade unions. Paul Bagguley (1991) is probably one of the very few authors who have attempted to provide a theoretical stance that explains the development of organisations of the unemployed. He analysed a series of political movements of the unemployed and used the NUWM as one example, focusing on organisational and cultural resources used by these movements to further their demands. Bagguley compared the NUWM with earlier similar movements like the anti-Poor Law Movement during the nineteenth century, the Land and Labour League, and the Social Democratic Federation. A distinctive aspect of the NUWM compared to these earlier movements is that it sought to organise the unemployed defining and pursuing their own interests (Bagguley, 1991, p. 86). Bagguley described the organisational resources of the NUWM as dialogical (Bagguley, 1991, p. 98) because the movement involved the rank and file in decision-making, exercised power through the actions of the members, communicated its claims in the form of normative claims, and was legitimised in particularistic terms concerning the beneficiaries (Bagguley, 1991, p. 49). Dialogical organisations tend to challenge the basic assumptions and parameters of the system, have quantitative short term demands, develop a decentralised and collective mode of action, seek to mobilise as many members from the social base as possible, and involve the unemployed in the organisation – are a movement of unemployed, not only for the unemployed (Ibid, 1991, p. 52).

Next to Bagguley, Flanagan (1991) is one of the few authors who have attempted to categorise the NUWM. For Flanagan, the NUWM represented the continuation of older forms of radical working-class politics, reliant upon mass consensual and involvement. Its politics became the expression of revolutionary and radical currents within the working class, spontaneous, rarely disciplined, and almost impossible to subjugate to democratic centralism, and to which the Communist Party did not want to give voice (Flanagan, 1991, p. 121). The NUWM's leaders conceived and ran the movement as something like a union, because they

were used to strong union organisation and traditional trade union values. They were trade unionists first, and unemployed agitators second (Flanagan, 1991, p. 122).

In the NUWM's own records, it is hard to find an explicit description of how the movement saw itself. There are little references that allow researchers to identify the type of organisation that the unemployed workers' movement aimed to be. For example, in the main resolution for the Eighth National Congress of the NUWM in April 1933, Hannington referred to the "tendency to treat the NUWM as a sort of trade union of the unemployed, concerned only with its own members" (MML WH8). From this, it is clear that, at least for the movement's leadership, the NUWM sought to avoid being categorised as a trade union. This makes sense; the movement did not intend to become a trade union, despite its efforts to become part of the trade union machinery – and, actually, it could not be one.

We are in front of an organisation that sought to bring together a group of people with an abnormal status, who were trying to escape the condition that united them – being unemployed – and who feared stigmatisation. Despite being workers and socialists, they were alien to the formal entities where workers and socialists can organise: employed workers united in a trade union and socialists being members of a political party. The status of "unemployed" is not one that people feel proud of. It was quite the opposite: they were stigmatised not only by society in general but also by their employed colleagues as if they were responsible for their condition. Furthermore, they were categorised as paupers, a categorisation which can be considered morally questionable; as a pool of degraded humanity, residuum and degeneration, whose entitlement to be beneficiaries of the public scheme of relief depended not on the right of human dignity, but on their merit as deserving people, as behaving poor subjected to the aggressive forms of poor relief (Clarke, 1988, p. 161). The NUWM was an organisation not seeking to find a permanent position in the formal system of industrial relations or to become a political party. Instead, the movement's features had a transitional character; it was a platform

through which unemployed workers, while out of work, could fight together for better conditions, but seeking at all times to return to work – the normal, stable situation they had been denied. It was not like any other social movement seeking the recognition of a permanent condition; like the movements representing civil, environmental or women's rights. The NUWM was an industrial, political movement seeking to suppress the temporary condition that defined its essence (being unemployed), taking specific functions all from trade unions, including organisation structure, a department dedicated to specific tasks, operational rules, stratified posts, a system of representation, membership register, press service, and even a system of appeals for internal control. The NUWM, therefore, amounted to a political organisation in between a social movement and a trade union, that brought to the political agenda an industrial concern of an exceptional dimension – mass and long term unemployment – and provided a complex political and economic explanation for its causes confronting not only the state for its deficient response but also the labour and trade union movement for its disdain to speak on behalf of the working class including both employed and unemployed workers.

The type of the identity of the NUWM fits somewhere near what Davis et al. (2005) call social movement organisations. These organisations are in their origin, social movements that endure a certain length of time and are sufficiently successful in becoming stable organisations. Social movement organisations share many features, both advantages and disadvantages, with formal organisations, such as a known location and group of participants, recognition as a more or less legitimate player, some continuity of mission and routines, an organisation at a national scale with widely widespread local affiliates, and articulation between organisational levels (Davis et al., 2005, p. 189). Kriesi (1996) points that social movement organisations are distinguished from other types of formal organisations – like supportive organisations, movement associations, or parties and interest groups – because they

mobilise their constituency for collective action and, do so with a political goal, to obtain some collective good from authorities thus, are highly dependent on their constituency for action (Kriesi, 1996, p. 152).

Despite the NUWM matches with those characteristics, the insights provided by Davis et al. and Kriesi are insufficient to clarify the particularities on the movement and its location in the industrial field. What the NUWM contested was not only relations of production while at work, but the failure of capitalist relations to employ workers who had been already at work. The NUWM sought to disrupt two dynamics: capitalist relations for exploiting the working class and conservative tendencies in trade unionism for acknowledging harmonic and mutual beneficial production trends. The unemployed workers faced, at the least, two exploitative forces: one that discarded them from work and another one that forced them to prove their willingness to find a new job and demonstrate that they were deserving of state aid. Bailey and Shibata (2013) highlight the kind of contestation that disrupts attempts to structure relations of exploitation and domination. The NUWM found scope for effective resistance to disrupt the systemic capacity for domination, reinforced by traditional trade unionism, and used its inherently disruptive nature to seek to change the system of unemployment assistance. At the same time, it sought to influence the employed workers, to show that their acquired status as employed workers did not change their position as members of the working class; proletarians who should fight hand-by-hand all workers, both employed and unemployed, and not against a fraction of them, the jobless. Drawing on Tsianos et al. (2012), Bailey and Shibata (2013) talk about the idea of imperceptible politics, "subversive acts of disobedience which always-already exist beyond apparatuses of capture and which therefore constantly disrupt and motivate changes to those apparatuses" (Bailey and Shibata, 2013, p. 243). Since World War I, that position was occupied first by the organised shop stewards that later became the leaders of the unemployed workers' movement.

The following sections seek to clarify the theoretical conditions that explain the emergence of industrial discontent and the development of statecraft of discontent management during interwar Britain. The discussion on industrial relations and trade unionism provides the base of the system of relations first disrupted by the organised shop stewards during World War I and that in the post-war years evolved to become the unemployed workers' movement. This will highlight the conflictual conditions at work that explain the emergence of industrial discontent and its evolution during the early 1920s into an organised machinery of protest that had to disrupt from outside the spaces of work.

2.2.- Corporate bias

This section outlines the arguments provided by Keith Middlemas on corporate bias to define the system of government developed in early twentieth-century Britain aimed at reducing conflict to guarantee stability and governability that allowed the United Kingdom to survive the unstable interwar years. Theoretically, Middlemas stands as a corporatist and a pluralist, but critical of the classical version of corporatism – used to define fascist regimes – and of pluralism as far as he portrays the state as the axis and main aspect of the triangular relationship with capital and labour. Middlemas's analysis frames this thesis's argument in terms of the state's strategy to promote a new form of governance that included business and labour interests to cooperate with the central government to reduce industrial conflict and avoid the arrival of crisis. Nevertheless, the thesis is critical of Middlemas's outline of an apparent neutrality of the state and the overestimation of the TUC's capacity for action and influence to the point of considering it a governing institution. Hence, it is important to present its main points and explain how his theory will be used throughout this work.

In 1979, Middlemas explained that after 1911, corporate bias developed in Britain as a new non-ideological political tendency that acquired the form of a reversible, tentative, and

fragile order, an imprecise non-hierarchical code between the state and bodies representing business and labour interests. This code aimed to maintain public consent on a political strategy – identified as the national interest – with the avoidance of crisis as the highest priority (Middlemas, 1979, p. 371). This implicit contract between the state, trade unions' representatives and business' associations developed in circumstances of extreme crisis and allowed Britain to guarantee social order and consent during the agitated interwar years as no other European state did (Ibid, p. 374). The new institutional arrangement shaped new functions and concepts of legitimacy and by-passed an atrophied parliamentary system, unable to initiate legislation or control governmental policy and finance (Ibid, p. 310, 330). With the development of corporate bias and the displacement of political debate from Parliament, political parties became more homogeneous in their range and variety of views and only kept their antique distinctions alive during electoral campaigns (Ibid, p. 310, 332).

The development of corporate bias was more visible in industrial politics, the area of greatest social conflict. The state facilitated the institutional growth of the representatives of business' and labour's interests and admitted them into the process of government, providing them with administrative and representative functions as intermediaries of central government (Ibid, p. 383). Thus, these organisations – Trade Union Congress (TUC), National Confederation of Employers Organisation (NCEO) and Federation of British Industries (FBI) – became governing institutions, bargaining partners of the government, committed to cooperation with it, not subordinated nor converted into agencies of state control but in a sort of parity with it, sharing its interests and assuming functions devoted and dictated almost entirely by governmental needs (Ibid, p. 372). A certain degree of understanding between the state, labour's and business' interests was achieved at the expense of diminishing innovation and overall economic growth (Ibid, p. 230).

Governing institutions became part of the extended managerial state; estates of the realm. They were granted permanent rights of access to state's powers, circumscribing governments' effective power and at times coming to, or at least appeared to, exercise unlimited control (Middlemas, 1979, p. 373, 381-382). They, nevertheless, did not become part of the state as such, in the sense that government departments are a part, although their leaders, at given times, took similar positions of mediation between society and the state than those of political parties (Ibid, p. 381).

Governing institutions developed corporate structures to the point at which their power, divergent aims, and class characteristics were harmonised at the expense of class distinction, individuality, and internal coherence (Ibid, p. 383). This relieved governments of the impossible task of dealing with, and harmonising the clash of wills of, a large number of heterogeneous interest groups at all levels of political life (Ibid, p. 379). Nevertheless, governing institutions – especially the TUC – failed to represent their constituencies fully, partly because the harmonising project proved conflictual with sectors of the unions' membership who opposed the association with the state and revolted from below (Ibid, p. 21)

Corporate bias tended to negate the most obvious manifestations of class conflict – which became diffused and transposed. The government preferred to bargain industrial struggles with closed, large, disciplined, hierarchical organisations instead of with divided interests incapable of expressing an agreed view. The state sought to compensate groups excluded from political bargaining, for example, by including them as new power groups. However, when marginal, dissident groups that could not be accommodated in the threshold became too large or hostile, the state and the governing institutions combined to exposed them as a threat to the – obsolescent – parliamentary system and isolated them. This operation should be careful to avoid creating martyrs (Ibid, pp. 374-376). The most visible marginalised dissident organisation during the interwar years in Britain was the NUWM.

Middlemas' account of corporate bias provides us with a good starting point to frame the analysis of the state's responses to the NUWM during the interwar years. It helps to explain why the state opted to restructure its base of authority and how it built a novel institutional arrangement with organisations that, during the nineteenth century, were assumed not only to work independently of the state but to develop functions to counteract state action. Nevertheless, Middlemas' accounts are limited for the type of analysis this thesis aims to provide. First, Middlemas's work is unclear regarding a theoretical stance on the state and conflict. His work offers no explicit set of theories about what the state is and its role in class struggle in capitalist societies. Most probably his understandings on the state and conflict are underpinned on a mixture of different theoretical traditions. Second, Middlemas does not develop in detail the concept of "governing institution". Although throughout his work it is empirically clear which organisations became governing institutions and the tasks they were able to perform, there is no abstract analysis of the category. Third, Middlemas tends to overestimate the capacity of governing institutions to influence the state, especially in the TUC case; this is exemplified in his claims that governing institutions became "estates of the realm" (Middlemas, 1979, p. 21). This thesis uses Middlemas's account of corporate bias not to endorse it in full, but as a suitable explanation about the capacity for state action in times of uncertainty and the specific type of governing strategies developed by the interwar British state to minimise industrial conflict and facilitate bargaining to guarantee governability. While Middlemas develops more on the case of the employers' associations and their relations with the TUC and the state, this work develops more the case of the accord between the state and the TUC, as well as their attitudes towards the NUWM, that Middlemas barely refers throughout his study.

2.3.- The theory of industrial relations

This section will clarify the theoretical assumptions and understanding of industrial relations employed throughout this thesis. It first introduces the orthodox approach of the so-called Oxford School, which explained the dynamics of control of work and trade unionism under pluralist lenses. Under this approach to industrial relations, conflict is not the central aspect that defines workers' grouping in trade unions. Conflict appears here only affecting one fraction of labour, and it does not necessarily unite workers against management. Instead, workers are driven by an instrumentalist vision, expecting a service in return of their sacrifice– transfer of authority to the leadership (Fox, 1971). Pluralists explain the persistence of trade unionism over time based on the returns that it has provided for both sides of the bargaining process. For pluralists, both sides of industry hold enough power to counteract its opponent thanks to a capacity of internal coordination and control (Clegg, 1979). The Pluralist school understand industrial relations as being determined by "voluntarism", which presents the main driver of attitudes with the relations at work that only accepts external aid when required and as far as it contributes to encouraging collective bargaining and the application of collective agreements (Flanders, 1974).

The second subsection outlines the theoretical analysis of industrial relations provided by Richard Hyman. Hyman defends the vision of trade unionism operating both economically and politically inside the contradictory dynamics of capitalist production. For him, trade unionism is based on structural material antagonism and inequality that, together with the commodity status of labour, create permanent conflict and disorder at the core of the institutions that rule work relations (Hyman, 1989). Throughout his analysis, Hyman draws attention to the permanent need for state intervention in industrial relations, due to the capitalists' dependence on labour self-discipline and cooperation for the extraction of surplus

value; as well as at the divisions that the system of wages and workers' classifications create with the body of workers that make it very difficult for them to unite in class terms.

2.3.1.- The Pluralist School

Clegg (1979) defined industrial relations as the "the study of the rules governing employment, together with the ways in which the rules are made and changed, interpreted and administered", otherwise put as the study of job regulation, including industrial conflict and the use of industrial action between and within trades unions, management, employers' associations and the public bodies concerned with the regulation of employment (Ibid, pp. 1-2). For Clegg, each group involved in industrial relations holds their own source of authority and can at times develop conflicts with each other. Next, each side seeks to persuade the other, expecting the achievement of concession as the outcome. Industrial disputes can be of two kinds: interpretation, on the application of agreements to a particular plant or company or, domestic, on plant or company's issues usually not regulated by industrial agreements (Ibid, p. 84).

Whenever industrial disputes occur, two kinds of rules can help regulate them: on the one hand, the substantive – those that set the rates of pay, the length of the working day, overtime, holidays, and so on – and, on the other hand, the procedural – which regulate the former. Procedural rules can be agreed in three ways: first, by collective bargaining, jointly by trade unions, management and employers' associations; second, unilaterally, leaving trade unions aside; or third, with state intervention through statutory regulation, which are legal rules (Ibid). Without putting much emphasis on the asymmetry of power, Clegg assumed that the existence of the collective bargaining relationship itself provides power resources for the parties in dispute and, that the fact that bargaining persists, is a sign that both sides believe there is something to gain from it (Ibid, p. 252). Clegg understood that both sides – employers and unions – have power to persuade the other party in the negotiation, for example with the

threat to withdrew or to push the negotiation to a higher stage where, especially managers, would be reluctant to go because it would imply to be exposed in front of their superiors as incapable of handling a negotiation (Clegg, 1979, p. 252). Clegg supposed that each side's strength in the negotiations depended on the internal coordination and unity, that it is a matter of the distribution of internal power to be in equal circumstances vis-à-vis the other industrial side (Ibid).

Clegg distinguished two industrial relations systems in Britain: the formal, embodied in the official institutions and, the informal, shaped by the parties' behaviour in the system. The former operates within industrial organisations capable of enforcing decisions on its members, assuming that most issues to be bargained can be dealt with by industrial agreements; reducing collective bargaining to a narrow range of issues (Ibid, p. 232). On the other hand, the latter – the informal system of industrial relations – rests on managers' autonomy in individual companies and factories and the power of industrial workgroups, capable of bargaining at a low industrial level on a wide range of issues – including discipline, recruitment, redundancy and work practise – and many important decisions on payment are taken in the factory (Ibid). There is a conflict between the two systems and there is no clear boundary between the two – because formality is a matter of degree – hence, all collective bargaining is a mixture of the two, with a variation in conflictual aspects: if a system relies more on informality it will grow procedures and arrangements of doubtful legitimacy; if it does on informality it risks the natural tensions with informal practises (Ibid, p. 240).

Clegg highlighted the doctrine of voluntarism that describes the tradition of British industrial relations that see state action as an outsider and rests on the principle of the law's abstention and the primacy of voluntary action. Drawing on Otto Kahn-Freund's thoughts, Clegg pointed out that, in no other major country besides Britain, has the law has played such an insignificant role, however, it has not been entirely absent. In three areas the law has been

particularly present: health and safety; the protection of groups considered to be unable to look after their own interests effectively; and in social security legislation – including unemployment, health insurance and pensions (Clegg, 1979, p. 291). The British Industrial Relations system gives preference to the intervention of the law to stimulate collective bargaining and the application of collective agreements, which leaves statutory methods that oblige and enforce legal sanctions as the second best (Ibid, p. 296).

On the tradition of voluntarism, Flanders (1974) explained that it defends workers' reliance on their own voluntary associations – trade unions, friendly societies, co-operatives – to achieve their goals (Ibid, p. 353) through collective bargaining, which provides social value; an important contribution to representative self-government in the political and social framework (Ibid, p. 364). At all levels, trade unions want to self-govern their affairs and conduct their own affairs with as little outside interference as possible (Ibid, p. 36). External aid is welcomed when needed and, before agreeing with it, unions always consider to what extent they would lose or gain control from such external intervention (Ibid, p. 363). Trade unions welcome positive legislative action, such as working hours and physical conditions regulation and legal enactment in periods of industrial weakness, when collective bargaining is unavailable or when its results are unacceptable (Ibid, p. 358). Nevertheless, they have traditionally rejected state intervention whenever, in the name of public interests, such action restricts trade unions' autonomy and independence (Ibid, p. 364) or, when it brings – or seems likely to bring – outcomes that involve courts' intervention in labour affairs, mainly because the impression of the court's class bias – against the working class – and because of how labour affairs are dealt with in courts, that are totally alien to the working of trade unions (Ibid, p. 354, 363). Flanders agrees with Kahn-Freund's idea that law enforcement in industrial relations would fail because, it seeks to counteract practises adopted by large numbers of people pursuing established social custom, norms of conduct, motivated by deep-seated convictions.

He states that sanctions through which legal norms are affected cannot be applied to counteract spontaneous behaviour of amorphous masses. Hence, the law cannot operate against the tradition of voluntarism, although, it can play a part in changing it (Flanders, 1974, p. 365).

Flanders suggests that most employers share with trade unions the preference for the voluntary settlement in labour affairs and the growth of such organisations. This is because trade union assistance can advance employers' interests in the market which furthers managerial control – particularly in large-scale industries – maintaining, for example, rules to regulate work and wages by seeking employees consent and cooperation or, by avoiding strikes by facilitating negotiation (Flanders, 1974, p. 355). However, Flanders criticises trade unions' for abandoning their primary responsibility – looking after their own members – and for transforming themselves into "instruments for the execution of government policy" (Ibid, p. 364).

Flanders outlines two great periods of membership growth in British union history: 1910-1920, 1933-1948. In the two world wars and the immediate post-war years, government action was more administrative than legislative, partly because they were particularly interested in gaining trade union goodwill during wartimes (Ibid, p. 356). While the First World War saw a reverse effect on the tradition of voluntarism, the Second World War saw a great triumph and vindication of it. Voluntarism's greatest war achievements were in wages policy and the handling of industrial disputes (Ibid, p. 359).

Flanders drew on Kahn-Freund thoughts on the paradoxical position of trade unions: they are, on the one hand, private, voluntary and autonomous associations but, on the other hand, they discharge vital public functions, some conferred upon them by legislation, or administrative practise, while others have been assumed by their own practise (Ibid, p. 363). It would be wrong if trade unions acted as if they had no social responsibilities and no obligation to acknowledge their conduct's social impact (Flanders, 1974, p. 364). On the same logic,

collective bargaining is a public function that responds to the social necessity for agreements backed on rules to regulate employment relations (Ibid, p. 364).

Allan Fox (1971), defined trade unions as the concentration of workers' power mobilised to strengthen the workers' position in employment struggles, in pursuit of policies in favour of the institutional survival and growth while also, to enhance its financial and organisational viability (Ibid, p. 108). Workers join unions under an instrumentalist vision to obtain a service that fulfils their individual or group's interests (Ibid, p. 14). This instrumentalist approach supposes that unions' growth is not necessarily the result of conflict or discontent among workers (Ibid, p. 108). Conversely, this approach assumes that the existence of discontent may not necessarily translate into membership growth, as conflict may only affect a fraction of the union and would be ignored by a large majority (Ibid, p. 135). According to Fox, joining a union involves a transference of workers' individual power to the collective, who surrender their freedom of action to the union, becoming subjected to a double source of authority and constraint – that of the management and of the union – on the idea that, as members of a group, they have a better chance to counteract the management's power (Ibid, p. 107, 108).

For Fox, unions develop ideologies to serve their own purposes, to legitimise their action, and adapt it according to circumstances (Ibid, p. 125). Unions' ideologies, Fox claims, never take the form of a consistent and related body of ideas and values. They become a mixture of assorted notions to suit exigencies, sometimes incompatible with each other (Ibid, p. 126). This is because such ideologies need to serve both the universalist appeals of all workers and particular groups' interests (craft or industry). Also, unions' ideology has a dual reaction towards government intervention: it welcomes it when needed – when it seems likely to benefit the collectivity – but refuse it when it appears to threaten the unions' functions (Ibid).

Unionisation creates tensions between the goals only achievable by collective action and the wish to evade the collectivity constraints (Fox, 1971, p. 121). These tensions are reflected in the development of conflict between officials, the active minority, and the mass membership; especially when differences of industrial or occupational interests express among the mass membership (Ibid, p. 114). To combat such conflict and any other threat to trade unions' unity, the leadership seeks to develop uniformity upon membership – like a system of positive and negative sanctions. If necessary, it counts on external sources – higher-level unions, management, employers' associations and the state (Ibid). Nevertheless, the leadership should aim at satisfying workers who expect something in return their investment. Otherwise, workers might organise factions, promote disaffection and replace the leadership – for which they count on a series of defensive measures like delegate meetings, the election of officers, appeals machinery, and aid from other unions (Ibid, p. 116, 122).

The Pluralist School of Industrial Relations provides an analysis insufficient to explain the emergence of an organisation like the NUWM. It assumes that labour representatives and employers' representatives are in somehow similar positions to compete with each other and that stability, harmony and a scenario of shared benefits are conceivable. The following section introduces Richard Hyman's concept against the Pluralist School and establishes the base for a framework that highlights conflict and asymmetry of power in work relations that seems more suitable to understand the rise of the shop stewards movement during wartime and the unemployed workers' movement during the interwar period in Britain.

2.3.2.- Hyman's criticism of the Pluralist school

Richard Hyman described pluralism as a heterogeneous body of analysis and prescription, both empiricist and normative – with no clear difference between them – framed by varied disciplinary roots, diverse conceptual and interpretative problems, and incapable of defining

the form and extent of the necessary competition between forces (Hyman, 1978, p. 16, 20). He regards industrial pluralism as a "loose and incomplete set of ideas, beliefs and values which acquire coherence only when complemented by background assumptions which are rarely articulated explicitly by pluralist writers themselves" (Ibid, 20).

Hyman criticised the pluralist understanding of society as competing social forces operating as intermediate groups between individuals and the state, with functional interdependence constraining absolutism and protecting the masses from totalitarian manipulation (Ibid, p. 19). For most pluralists – Hyman notes – group competition is compatible with social stability and integration (Ibid, p. 32) and they tend to idealise industrial peace and the feasibility of an industrial society with enough scope for compromise among the contending parties, with no undue concentration of power, no large accumulations, and hence, no space for disruption (Ibid, p. 20); Although they build upon the premise of conflict of interest in industry, they channel the analysis towards minimising such conflict, instead of deepening on its origins, functioning and outcomes (Ibid, p. 32). However, whenever disadvantaged social and economic groups come to break such harmony, pluralists regard them as extremists, undemocratic, and authoritarian because their chosen strategies to defend their interests provokes conflict to the extent that jeopardises political stability (Ibid, p. 33).

Hyman regrets the pluralist tendency to defend industrial self-government and voluntarism, overemphasising job regulation and control – relegating labour welfare concerns to the periphery – under a narrowly defined idea of industrial problems rather than with general issues or explicit ideological aspects of industrial relations (Ibid, p. 22). He notes the conservative procedural bias in pluralism that gives too much importance to rules – especially around administrative detail – and the engineering of cooperation, and only limited attention to workers' substantial interests and principles (Ibid, pp. 34-35).

Particularly on the work of Ross (1958) and Fox, Hyman identifies an overstated emphasis on conflict in the workplace rather than on a broader level, a lack of attention to structural antagonism in the relationship employers-labour, and privileged attention towards the fragmentation of employers' interests than on conflicts and divisions within labour groups (Ibid, p. 23, 25).

Hyman points at the paradoxical claim of the Pluralist school that, while portraying a plurality of sectional groups in society, they appear, at the same time, united around a single public or national interest – common to all groups – whose natural impartial guardian is the state – an impartial agency immune to any influence, independently on its economic power, whose main aim is to guarantee the maximum degree of freedom of association and action to groups (Ibid, p. 21, 23).

2.3.3.- Hyman's theory of industrial relations

Richard Hyman defines industrial relations as "the study of processes of control over work relations", with a particular focus on those involving collective workers' organisation and action, and on work relationships deriving from institutional regularities (Hyman, 1975a, p. 11). Nevertheless, he proposes to go beyond the term itself of industrial relations – originated in the nineteenth century among the upper classes worried about "the labour problem" altering social order – (Hyman, 1989, p. 4) and, to avoid the differentiation between economistic and non-economistic trade unionism because unionism necessarily transcends mere economism and always operates politically (Ibid, p. 46). This theory is concerned with the contradictory dynamics of capitalist production, the commodity status of labour, the structural material antagonism in work and market relations and its permanent conflict and disorder expressed in the core of institutions and procedures shaped to guarantee order and stability to work relations (Ibid, p. 35). It is important to see a rationality of workers' struggles that, for instance, sees in strikes not only incidents in the conduct of collective bargaining but fundamentally a positive

and purposeful expression of important social and political labour motivations in collective industrial activity (Hyman, 1975a, p. XI, 99).

Hyman's theoretical rationale emphasises the unequal relations of control, dominated mainly by employers, who set the systems of wages and salaries (Ibid, p. 25), precipitating divisions within labour and breaking class solidarity, reflected in workers' identity first and foremost as members of a specific occupational group, employees of a given firm or on a particular industry, developing specific sectional loyalties that discourage them from organising and defining their interests in class terms (bid, p. 27). This division between workers is visible as well in the labour movement's structure and in collective bargaining, where the main contestation is not workers' exploitation, but the relative economic advantages of different sections of the working class; obfuscating once again workers' self-conception as a class (Ibid, p. 28).

At the core of industrial relations, Hyman portrays trade unionism as the manifestation of industrial conflict to counteract employers' power (Hyman, 1975b, p. 5), the formalisation and generalisation of the process of workers' resistance to, and negotiation with, the structure of capitalist domination in the relationships at work (Hyman, 1989, p. 36), seeking to build workers' solidarity and to reduce individual employees' vulnerability (Ibid, p. 37). However, trade unionism always appears after capital established its strong dominance, therefore, labour always relates to capital in a position of inequality, hence there can never be a balance of power of equal negotiations (Ibid, p. 110).

Trade unions are the representative organisations of workers, based upon, but transcending collectivism of particular workplaces and localities, traditionally separated by craft. Only a fraction of their organisation and activity is represented by full-time employees based on a union office. Their essential function is not to be involved in the production of identifiable goods or services, but to overcome the individual workers' weakness by

substituting a collective bargain for separate individual bargaining, in an attempt to influence the actions and decisions of employers, legislators and other state and non-state entities (Aris, 1998, 10-11). Trade unions face not only the historical hostility of the agencies of the state and capital but also the struggles produced by contradictory demands and interests of the different sectional workers' groups, that require the development of abilities to mediate and accommodate conflicting pressures coming from elsewhere (Hyman, 1989, p. 39). This is partly because the accommodation of one side of trade unionism to the economic priorities of the state and the employers – who require workers' cooperation and self-discipline and are happy to offer in return organisational security and status to unions in return – will never be equally shared in all strata within labour because most of the time their own material interests will be neglected (Ibid, p. 109). Individual and collective workers' strategies need to be understood as operating inside a set of contradictory social pressures and shaped by complex interaction processes within and outside the workplace. A critical approach should be sceptical about the notion of uniforms interests and criteria within unions as a whole (Ibid, p. 109).

One premise that Hyman shares with some aspects of the Pluralist school of Industrial Relations is the subordination and divergence of workers' own interests to collective decision making as soon as they join a union to pursue shared objectives (Ibid, p. 40). Such subordination restricts individual members' freedom to express conflict to protect arrangements and understandings achieved between the union leadership and management, which can get to the point of suppressing questions of principle and transmuting the very character of employee grievances by defining their interests in a very narrow focus (Ibid). It is then when shop stewards' organisation comes to light; they become managers of discontent –like unions, in principle – organising the rank and file to constrain leadership autocracy (Hyman, 1971, p. 46), sustaining job control within the boundaries of negotiation with managerial authority and capitalist priorities, rather than pursuing frontal opposition (Hyman, 1989, p. 42). In the British

case, their continuing existence as an independent power base remains permanently on the agenda, at times causing alarm for the autonomous nature of their control of workers' shop-floor organisation (Hyman, 1971, p. 51).

Because collective laissez-faire is never absolute, the state is never totally alien to relations at work and economic policy (Hyman, 1989, p. 47). There is a changing, but constant interrelation of the internal selection of trade union's strategy and the external patterns of collaboration between unions and the state – and neither can be adequately comprehended without reference to the other (Ibid, p. 108). Such relations are likely to divide labour further because they create conflicts of interests, where the leaders seek to follow accommodative practises to enhance their own power within their organisation (Ibid, p. 109). It is crucial to see this as a complex dialectic with a broad scope of social and political relations, as a continuum of modes of interaction and strategies within social relations of production and class struggle – addressing the changing forms of state involvement. This approach would avoid the tendency to see the state intervention in industrial relations as a simplistic dichotomy between peace and order on the one hand and, conflict and chaos on the other. This approach also would supply a more sophisticated understanding of relationships between workers and management in an industrial society (Ibid, p. 101). Such analysis needs to acknowledge the location of labour activity in the process of accumulation and valorisation of capital, which explains the need for employers to develop a control and surveillance system that guarantees labour subordination. It also needs to fight the notions of neutrality, autonomy and inevitable transformation of technology (Ibid, p. 131).

Once we have addressed the area of industrial relations focusing on the labour side and the dynamics at work, highlighting the development of trade unionism and the role that unions play in modern capitalist societies, we can move on to the other side of the relationship: the

state. The following section seeks to explain how we are to understand what the state is, where it is located in work relations, and define its role as an arbiter in social relation of production.

2.4.- The theory of the state

To understand the role and limits of the state in managing industrial discontent during interwar Britain, this thesis is based on a theoretical approach that derives the state from Marx's account of the circuit of capital and focuses its attention on the changing character of the form of the political in relation to such circulatory process (Burnham, 2006, p. 73; Burnham, 2001, p. 104). For this reason, this section begins with a simplified analysis of the circuit of capital explained by Marx, followed by an understanding of the conflictual social relations of production and the concept of crisis, that accompanied by a comment on the dialectical relationship between the economic and the political, allow us to arrive at an understanding of, on the one hand, the form of the capitalist state and, on the other hand, the clarification of the state apparatus. The last subsection locates the role of the capitalist state historically in Britain during the interwar period.

Throughout the second volume of *Capital*, Marx explained in detail the circuit of capital. In a simplified overview of the complexity of such circulatory process and for the purpose of this framework, it is important to consider the following aspects. The circuit of capital is an abstraction of the cycle of the production process in capitalism, a transformation that aims to revalorise capital through the extraction of surplus-value, a process of wealth expansion that depends on the appropriation of somebody else's labour (Bonefeld, 1992a, pp. 101-102). The abstraction of the circuit of capital can be divided into three functional forms or stages. Two of them belong to the sphere of circulation, money capital and commodity capital and one to the productive sphere, or productive capital, where commodities are transformed and acquire new value (Burnham, 2006, p. 76; Burnham, 2001, 104). The circuit begins with

the stage in which the commanding power of capital exchanges the money-form of capital for means of production (tools, infrastructure) and labour-power (capacity of workers to work) and puts them to work, transforming capital to its productive form seeking to obtain commodities of greater value than the original components of production (Burnham, 2006, p. 77). If that stage is fulfilled, the circuit comes then to its moment of commodity capital when the commodities obtained can be expected to be sold and obtain self-valorised money capital again, thanks to labour-power in action (Ibid).

The circulatory transformation of capital throughout the three stages involves social relations of production that face a series of contradictions and obstacles at every moment, that delay, interrupt and put in crisis the reproduction process (Ibid). Among the large list of contradictions in the social relations of production, we can utilise here some. One is labour's subordination to capital – that uses its power in the form of a series of material, ideological and political means to impose divisions and hierarchies within the working class, inhibiting their ability to organise as a class (Clarke, 1991a, p. 191). Another would be the capitalists' exploitation of labour, given that labour is the main agent of production and that capital exists only in and through labour (Bonefeld, 1992a, p. 101). Additionally, we can think of commodity fetishism: the measurement of labour's work product in the form of money and the treatment of the relations between producers as relations between commodities, as if it was the case of relations between things (Holloway, 1992, p. 151). These contradictions create inescapable antagonistic relations that are expressed in the form of class struggle and crisis.

Because the concept of class relations – hence class struggle and crisis – is analytically prior to that of the political and the economic forms that such relations acquire (see Clarke, 1991a) – let alone the state – let us briefly address the understanding of such concepts before moving on with the theory of the state. Capitalist social relations of production, class relations, constitute asymmetrical and antagonistic relations based on the imposition of work – the

subordination of labour to capital facilitated by the separation of the former of the means of production and subsistence – the rotation of capital, the extraction of surplus-value and the reproduction of the circuit (Burnham, 2001, p. 104). All social existence constitutes a movement of contradiction that needs to be understood as a concrete historical development as opposed to a static form (Bonefeld, 1992a, p. 102). Such antagonistic class relations – expressed in class struggles – manifest themselves in economic, political and legal forms (Burnham, 2006, p. 73), as crises that must be understood not simply as hard times, but fundamentally as turning points, discontinuities of history, breaks in the path of development, ruptures in a pattern of movement, and variations in the intensity of time (Holloway, 1992, p. 146). Hence, capitalist social relations are conflictual, unstable, unpredictable and potentially disruptive relations constantly changing into unprecedented modes. This situation calls for a permanent intervention of state managers to mediate in conflict (Burnham, 2006, p. 73).

After briefly outlining the circuit of capital and class relations, whose antagonism derives in a constant crisis, we can draw on the historical superficial separation between the political and the economic. Such distinction must be historically understood as a process of bourgeois revolution that sought to transform personal – private – domination into an impersonal – public – political power, which capital, nevertheless, expected to use for the extension of its private domination – extraction of surplus labour and accumulation (Clarke, 1991a, p. 167). But the distinction between the economic and the political as two different processes is only a fetishism, a superficial analysis of a complex interrelation of phenomena, a separation that only can be seen as such as a moment of capitalist relations (Holloway, 1992, p. 160; Burnham, 2006, p. 73). In capitalism all social relation presupposes, "every phenomenon exists only in relation to other phenomena… the economic and the political stand to each other as moment of one process" (Bonefeld, 1992a, p. 101). Hence, the economic and

the political forms of the social relations in capitalism must be understood as moments, as modes of existence of such relations throughout the circuit of capital.

Throughout this thesis, the state is understood as a social formation (Jessop, 1990, p. 121; Bonefeld, 1992a, p. 98), a historically determinate moment – a transitory form – of the capital relation in its process of reproduction (not necessary for it, although historically important in serving it, and subordinated to it). The state's role, determined by its social form, is that of a regulative agency to guarantee exchange, mediating between production and consumption (Holloway, 1991, p. 215; Holloway and Picciotto, 1991, pp. 124-125; Bonefeld, 1992a, p. 98). The state intervenes in the class struggle – although it is also an essential, integral, and dependent part of it – (Clarke, 1991a, pp. 188-189), and it is institutionally separated from the core of capitalist production, as it remains external to capital accumulation (Jessop, 1990, pp. 355-356; Holloway and Picciotto, 1991, p. 139).

The state is not neutral, nor it has clear bias between social forces and political projects (Clarke, 1991a, p. 184; Jessop, 1990, p. 353). The state disguises a displacement of the conflictual social relations from the economic to the political, where surplus value production appears in non-class forms as a series of rights, equality and freedom to be protected from social conflict, labour indiscipline, working-class' strengthening, or any standard incompatible with accumulation, through the state's enforcement of law and order (Bonefeld, 1992a, pp. 118-122; Holloway, 1991, pp. 75-76 in Burnham, 2006, p. 75). Nevertheless, the state is not an agent of capital – it could not guarantee the general conditions suitable to every particular capital – (Bonefeld, pp. 118-122), but a provisional and complementary form that can be used by capital to overcome its contradictions and guarantee the reproduction of the social relations of production (Clarke, 1991a, p. 191). Because the state is subordinated to the reproduction of capital, as a moment of it, it ends up complementing the always provisional capital's

subordination of the working class. The state form of the class struggle is a moment of it and complementary to its other moments (Clarke, 1991a, p. 192).

The core of the state apparatus, as described by Bob Jessop, is a 'distinct ensemble of institutions and organisations whose socially accepted functions is to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on the members of a society in the name of their common interest or general will' (Jessop, 1990, 342). Such institutions include the national and local government, administration, military and police, the judiciary and assemblies, but its main aspect is the central government, because it speaks on the state's behalf, provides its unity, and is expected to control state's power (Ibid), it directs the administrative, the military and the police, and retains a certain degree of local government's power (Miliband, 1970, p. 36).

2.5.- The interwar British state and corporatism

As we have seen throughout this chapter, the analysis of the action of the state and the dynamics of industrial relations need to be analysed based on a series of premises: that capitalism is based on unequal, exploitative, antagonistic, contradictory and, therefore, conflicting and everchanging social relations of production that create a series of distinctive crises that need to be addressed by a permanent system of crisis management by state managers, whose performance is affected by the same circulatory crises (Burnham, 2006, p. 78). Because the focus of this analysis is based on the changing form of political in relation to the circuit of capital (Burnham, 2006, p. 73; Burnham, 2001, p. 104), it is worth noting the different kind of problems that state managers face depending on the circuit of capital where struggles are expressing; each crisis will be different, not only depending on the sphere of the circuit where it occurs, but also on a multiplicity of other factors, hence each and every response of the state, as well as its outcomes, will be different. In the circulation sphere of the circuit, the state faces inflation problems, in the stage of money capital, and of balance of payments, in the stage of commodity capital. It is in the sphere of production, productive capital, where labour-power –

the only factor that valorises capital – where we find problems in industrial relations (Burnham, 2006, p. 76) and it is there where this work seeks to analyse the features of the crisis and the responses of the state.

The British state during the interwar period sought to contain class struggle by reducing capital accumulation through the introduction of expansionary fiscal and monetary policies that, far from containing social unrest, created an inflationary crisis that stimulated a new form of class struggle that targeted not only capital but the state (Clarke, 1988, p. 138). The state developed a series of economic measures like rationalising the system of public finance and accounting, a balanced budget, and restrictive fiscal and monetary policies. On the other hand, while repressing the revolutionary side of industrial discontent, the state contained the less agitated side of class agitation through the development of a new system of industrial relations, social reform and by the reconstruction of the working-class political identity in a way that was united in a national project (Ibid, p. 142, 144).

This framework shapes the theoretical understanding under which we analyse the emergence of the NUWM and its relations to the state and the trade unions. The NUWM should be seen, then, as an industrial, political movement (in between a social movement and a trade union) that disrupted a reversible, tentative and fragile tendency – corporate bias – which took the form of an implicit contract between the state, trade unions' representatives and business' associations aimed to avoid the arrival of crisis as the highest priority. This framework insists on the asymmetrical, conflictual, changing and therefore unexpected and open aspects of the social relations of production. It understands the state as a social formation, a transitory form of the capital relation in its process of reproduction, a regulative agency that intervenes in class struggle to guarantee exchange, of which is also part. This open view of the state highlights the state's lack of neutrality and its changing and unclear bias and focuses on how the political

form constantly reshapes and adapts itself depending on the changes in the relations of production.

3.- The formation of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement and its aftermath, 1921-1926

Introduction

This chapter explains the formation of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement (NUWM) and its relationship to the state and the trade unions from 1921 to 1926. The NUWM's background and its early years of existence inform the characteristics of one side of the governing strategies developed by interwar British administrations to build a statecraft of industrial discontent management that guaranteed political stability and governability during the interwar years. The form and strength that the unemployed workers' movement developed during the first half of the 1920s explain the attitude that the trade union movement and the state developed towards it during the late 1920s and the whole 1930s. Soon the TUC General Council came to see the NUWM as a rival, whose existence and progress jeopardised the trade union movement's position as an associate of the government, and the state targeted it as a problematic organisation that was impossible to co-opt and difficult to marginalise without making a martyr of it.

Britain ended the Great War with an expanded state, with high capacity for economic and social intervention, yet more dependent on the consent of a society that demanded from it greater social rights and services (Cronin, 1991, p. 67; Mowat, 1968, p. 14). The war reshaped the state's role and its bureaucratic structure. The British state incorporated in its apparatus representatives of business and labour's interests that influenced policymaking during the early interwar years vis-à-vis the orthodox Treasury and the Bank of England (Cronin, 1991, p. 67; Mowat, 1968, p. 14). This restructuring had benefited the workers politically – strengthening their capacity of organisation and representation – whilst generating significant profits to businesses despite reducing their political influence. Nevertheless, throughout the decade, the Treasury view and bankers' interests tended to dominate policymaking (Cronin, 1991, p. 67).

From 1916, David Lloyd George governed with great powers under an alliance that rested on the close cooperation and confidence between one side of the Liberals and the Conservatives (Mowat, 1968, p. 6). By 1921, the alliance had lost its prestige and authority, mainly because a group within the Conservative Party, led by Bonar Law, believed that it was time for the Party to leave the alliance to preserve its unity (Ibid, p. 143; James, 1978, p. 155). The lack of Conservative support brought the alliance down, and a new election gave a vast majority of 347 seats to the Conservatives, 60 to the Liberals standing with Asquith, 57 for those on David Lloyd George's side, and 142 for the Labour Party. Bonar Law became the Prime Minister but died shortly after and was substituted by Stanley Baldwin, who governed for two years before the first Labour government in 1924, and then again from 1924 until 1929. The Labour Party chose Ramsay MacDonald, a moderate, as its leader and brought to Parliament new members like Clement Attlee and Arthur Greenwood, the next generation's main characters – John Robert Clynes, James Henry Thomas, Phillip Snowden, George Lansbury, and Sidney Webb – and some recruits escaping from the defeated Liberal Party, like Charles Philips Trevelyan, Arthur Ponsonby, and Noel Buxton (Mowat, 1968, p. 147).

The aftermath of the Great War in Britain saw a restructuring of party politics and enfranchisement. The Liberal Party progressively declined. The Conservative Party – financed by business capital – became more robust. The Labour Party grew on the disillusionment with the lack of governmental capacity to deliver progressive policies and fulfil the space left by the Liberal Party. It was aided financially by the trade unions and consolidated as a national party after former autonomous local Labour Parties affiliated to it (James, 1978, 158; Mowat, 1968, p. 18; Cronin, 1991, p. 67). The Representation of the People Act 1918 created 21 million new electors, 78% of the adult population who, despite the fears of political disorder, voted moderate allowing the political system to remain remarkably stable (Mowat, 1968, p. 6; Pugh, 1996, p. 175; James, 1978, p. 116).

From early in the interwar period, the Treasury and the Bank of England imposed their view on policymaking, including the reduction of public expenditure to balance the budget, a deflationary policy to reduce inflation, and the restoration of the gold standard, though not without struggles with members of the Cabinet concerned with the provision of the state's essential services (Peden, 2000, p. 128). The Treasury sought to remove state controls that had been created during the war and that were obstructing private investment and to develop strategies to reduce unemployment burdens from loan-financed public works and unemployment insurance – that depended on Treasury subsidies because of the insufficiency of contributions (Ibid; James, 1978, p. 123; Pugh, 1996, p. 168). Government expenditure was reduced by two thirds between 1917-18 and 1920-21, especially hitting education and health services (Mowat, 1968, p. 130; James, 1978, p. 152).

During the aftermath of the war, a speculative industrial boom developed and increased wages 35% between 1919 and 1921 and inflated prices 44% from 1919 to 1921 (Peden, 2000, p. 128; Mowat, 1968, p. 26; James, 1978, p. 152). The national debt amounted to over a billion pounds, and creditors started recalling the loans. The debt interest remained three hundred million a year until the following decade, which absorbed 20-40% of government expenditure (Pugh, 1996, p. 163; James, 1978, p. 123). The debt responsibilities encouraged discussions on the form that the tax system should take, and it was agreed on a balanced distribution across the different classes (Cronin, 1991, p. 61).

The Ministry of Reconstruction had suggested demobilisation of the armed forces releasing first the last men who joined, who were crucial to industry and who would open more job opportunities for the remaining service-men. Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for War, decided to reverse the mechanism and proceed to demobilise based on service length, which created a bottleneck in industrial reincorporation (Mowat, 1968, p. 22; James, 1978, p. 134). During 1919, over four million men were demobilised – something like 10,000 daily. From

those, many benefited from the post-war boom and managed to find a job quickly, however others, especially officers, struggled to find a place in industry (Mowat, 1968, p. 22). The positions occupied by ex-servicemen in industry were not necessarily new jobs, but in many cases areas previously occupied by women, 250,000 of whom were dismissed within a year after the end of the war remained either unemployed or dedicated to domestic service (Ibid, p. 23).

In early 1919, widespread industrial unrest developed in Glasgow in the form of a general strike, organised mostly by the Clyde Workers' Committee and the Triple Industrial Alliance – composed of miners, railwaymen, and the transport workers – aided by the engineers, demanding a reduction of the working week to 40 hours to absorb unemployment (James, 1978, p. 134-135; Mowat, 1968, p. 24). After the government reacted aggressively in Glasgow to neutralise the mobilisations, it sought other strategies to prevent industrial militant groups and created the National Industrial Conference 1919 – with representatives of the two sides of industry, workers and employers – that disappeared two years later, in 1921, after workers' became disappointed with its results (Mowat, 1968, p. 36).

Social unrest also came from the difficulties between owners and workers in industry – especially in mining – after the government decontrolled industry together with the industrial slump from 1921 onwards (Mowat, 1968, p. 29; James, 1978, p. 152). In 1921 both imports and exports increased over 40% compared to 1920, wages decreased, and unemployment reached 17.8% of the insured population, mainly concentrated in shipbuilding, iron and steel, engineering, and construction and geographically focused in Northern Ireland, Scotland, the Midlands and the North-East of England (Mowat, 1968, p. 125¸ James, 1978, p. 159; Pugh, 1996, p. 167).

The unemployed workers' movement was formed by members of SSM and ex-servicemen organisations who, after the end of the post-war industrial boom, found themselves

unemployed, partly because of their militant and dissident activities seeking to amalgamate trade unionism – aiming to unite the working class as a class – and to achieve full coverage of unemployment assistance with higher rates of relief. The organisation of the unemployed became a concern for the state, which infiltrated the movement to get a clear image of its activities and goals. The TUC General Council was also worried about the development of the unemployed workers' movement because it jeopardised the trade unions' understanding with the state and employers' organisations, which explains the General Council's reluctant attitudes towards the NUWM since the early 1920s.

The first section of the chapter draws on the history of the organisations that preceded and influenced the formation and focus of the NUWM. These organisations included the Shop Stewards' Movement (SSM), the Clyde Workers' Committee, the Sheffield Workers' Committee, the Coventry Unemployed Workers' Committee, and the London District Council of Unemployed Organisations, and ex-servicemen organisations like the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers and the National Union of Ex-servicemen. The second section explains the foundation of the NUWM, in April 1921, and the immediate atmosphere surrounding it, as well as the reaction of the state and the trade union movement. The third section looks at the NUWM's early attempts to approach and integrate with the Trade Union Congress and the Joint Advisory Council's experience. The fourth section analyses the state's reaction to the unemployed workers' movement, mostly in the form of infiltration and tracking of its activities. This section also draws on the NUWM's firsts requests to the national government to receive delegations of the movement, its pressures to local governments, mostly through the Boards of Guardians – the local administrations of the Poor Law – for more and better relief for the unemployed, and the early street mobilisations in the form of hunger marches. The fifth section outlines the first years of the NMM – the communist movement that worked alongside the NUWM during the 1920s seeking to influence trade unionism from inside

the trade unions. The sixth section of this chapter draws on a brief cleavage in the NUWM which became the Unemployed Workers' Organisations that, for a few months in 1921, challenged the authority and development of the NUWM. The chapter closes with a brief epilogue about the 1926 General Strike that radically changed the relationship between the trade unions, the state, and business representatives and their attitudes towards the NUWM.

3.1 The NUWM's background: The Shop Stewards' Movement and the organisations of ex-servicemen

The history of the NUWM is rooted in the SSM experience and in organisations of former servicemen. The former was the organisation of militant workers' committees, representing the rank-and-file workers fighting against dilution - the substitution of skilled workers by machinery and semi-skilled workers produced by technological change. The second group gathered ex-servicemen who came back home – supposedly "a land fit for heroes" – after the end of the war, to find no jobs or unemployment insurance for them – apart from limited coverage by the Munition Workers' Insurance Act of 1916 or the Poor Law, designed for paupers. This section explains the formation and experience of the SSM and the most relevant ex-servicemen organisations during wartime and its aftermath that contributed to the foundation of the NUWM in 1921.

3.1.1.- The Shop Stewards' Movement

The SSM is not only the NUWM's predecessor; the unemployed workers' movement resembled the SSM in terms of structure and its relation to the state and the trade unions. The influence, then, is such that is necessary to dedicate this section to a brief overview of the experience of the SSM to understand better the context, the formation and first years of existence of the NUWM.

Technological change in industry caused ‘dilution’ – the substitution of skilled workers by semi-skilled workers – which negatively impacted skilled workers, especially in engineering workshops. The inaction of the trade unions to protect skilled workers' interests resulted in the emergence of an effective workshop organisation with different expressions depending on geographical areas. For example, in the Midlands (especially in Birmingham and Coventry), the progressive pre-war introduction of modern technology of the motor car and aircraft complex and the existing presence of semi-skilled workers in the shops reduced the impact of dilution, and therefore created less discontent among the skilled workers. In comparison, in the north, dilution impacted much harder in the shops with archaic technology and controlled by the craft aristocracy who deeply opposed the abrupt disintegration of their aspirations (Hinton, 1973, p. 333). The engineers' militancy would become the major domestic problem confronting governments during the war (Ibid, p. 14).

The response from shop stewards to dilution was the creation of workers' committees – organised militant sections of the rank-and-file that represented workers' organisation alongside the trade unions (Darlington, 1998, p. 38). The Clyde Workers' Committee was the first and the most important of these new organisations, whose predominant influence remained, at least, until mid-1917. Its model was followed by the organisation of workers' committees in Sheffield, Liverpool, Birmingham, Coventry, Barrow, London, and Manchester. Thus, the Clyde Workers' Movement in 1915 marked the beginning of the history of the SSM (Pribicevic, 1959, p. 83).

The SSM was the most important unofficial rank-and-file organisation in the aftermath of the Great War in Britain, notably powerful and influential in engineering establishments, successful to the extent that its local leaders managed to interpret the workers' desires, demands and grievances (Pribicevic, 1959, p. 102). Most of the SSM’s members were part of the Amalgamation Committee – an organisation seeking to fuse the different industrial unions into

one big industrial union – which merged in 1918 into one only organisation (Darlington, 1998, p. 31). The SSM was committed to the workers' control of production and the abolition of capitalism, under the premise that only workers themselves can forge their emancipation, through an independent rank-and-file organisation – as opposed to individual action – to counteract union bureaucratisation (Ibid, p. 35, 40; Frow, 1982, p. 34).

The unofficial rank-and-file organisation broke the post-war industrial truce – endorsed by the War Emergency Workers' National Committee – when it became evident that employers were taking advantage of it to intensify exploitation and raise their profits and in light of the state's bias towards capital's domination, assisting management in marginalising the traditional values of engineering craftsmen's organisation (Hinton, 1973, p. 337; Pribicevic, 1959, p. 84; Frow, 1982, p. 35; Darlington, 1998, p. 35; Middlemas, 1979, p. 66). To these, it added the discontent about mandatory conscription and the fact that the Treasury Agreement and the Munitions of War Act (1915) banned strikes and forced the unions to accept government arbitration (Middlemas, 1979, p. 75).

The SSM consisted of the workshop organisation, district workers' committees and the national organisation (Privicevic, 1982, p. 94). In August 1917, the movement established its National Administrative Committee that, together with the National Conferences, constituted the primary organism at a national scale (Ibid, p. 101). Such a structure was likely influenced by Jack T. Murphy's anti-leadership views and confidence in the shop floor workers' organisation vis-à-vis the failures of the official labour leaders who, besides, were corrupt (Darlington, 1998, p. 47). For many years, the NAC held no executive power and functioned as little more than a reporting centre for the local committees, with no paid officials.

The SSM was influenced by the Socialist Labour Party, whose members assumed a leading position in establishing the movement, particularly in Glasgow. Both the party and the movement shared criticisms of the official trade unions for being "rotten props" of the capitalist

order, for their lack of workshop organisation, sectionalism, officialism and for having a prevailing craft outlook (Darlington, 1998, p. 31; Privicevic, 1982, p. 89). However, the party's official attitude towards the SSM was intermittent. The SLP became disaffected with the movement because it concentrated on practical day-to-day problems, particularly those regarding dilution of labour, and for its lack of focus upon the formation of a new industrial union. After 1920, their relationship strained (Privicevic, 1982, p. 86). The influence of the Independent Labour Party and the British Socialist Party (Social Democratic Federation before 1911) was more local and less important; only two leaders of the Clyde Workers' Committee were members of those parties: Kirkwood (ILP) and Gallacher (BSP).

During the war years, the SSM sought to develop and expand within the existing trade unions towards constructing one big union – uniting all industrial unions – and refusing to take over trade unions' power and official posts and instead develop a revolutionary political struggle. Based on the syndicalist tradition, most SSM members ignored the connections between politics and economics, between industrial agitation and socialist politics, conceiving politics as something external to work relations, and ignored the link between diminishing working conditions and conscription vis-a-vis war and capitalism. In comparison, after 1919, the SSM shifted the emphasis to revolutionary transformation and the takeover of trade unions' power, influenced by the events of the Bolshevik Revolution and the movement's post-war decline (Privicevic, 1982, pp. 90-91; Darlington, 1998, pp. 41-42).

During its early years of existence, the SSM was a federation of committees, with heterogeneous relations among them. In some cases, the antagonism between committees was intense; in others, there was a degree of cooperation. At one extreme, the Clyde Workers' Committee developed bitter relationships with the local union officials, notably the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), but even on the Clyde, there were cases of cooperation between shop stewards and the local trade unions. By contrast, workers'

committees in Sheffield took a moderate line with the local trade unions, and developed a reasonable degree of cooperation, particularly with the ASE. In Liverpool and Coventry, there were cases of a closer connection between workers' committees and trade unions (Privicevic, 1982, pp. 96-97; Darlington, 1998, p. 41).

The state contested the SSM development by setting constant police surveillance on its members, establishing agencies reporting on labour unrest, and developing a machinery of industrial espionage (Darlington, 1998, p. 49). Probably without envisaging the change in industrial politics that was growing, the state implemented no more than short-term strategies seeking to shield to survive the war (Middlemas, 1979, p. 21). After 1917, when the state realised that trade union officials had lost much of their authority and status at shop floor level, central government administrations had to recognise the SSM's force and incorporate them into labour negotiations. This temporary situation ended soon in the aftermath of the war. The restoration of pre-war industrial practises reduced the need for the workshop, and the trade union machinery found its rights fully restored and resumed their activities. This led to a grave setback of the SSM, reversing and seizing many of its claims (Privicevic, 1982, p. 103).

The Ministry of Labour's intelligence division produced accounts on the SSM development (TNA LAB 2/697/15, 1920). The intelligence documents described the movement as a wartime development of the shop stewards' system of workers' representation, with enough capacity and power to challenge the whole Trade Union system, of which they were initially functionaries. The intelligence division explained that the shop stewards had made the workshop the basis of their organisation because trade union officials were out of touch with the rank-and-file – especially in engineering – and had become suspicious vis-à-vis the workers. Industrial action had become the method to radically reform the industrial and social system, seeking the protection of the workers' interests and the complete control of production and distribution (TNA LAB 2/697/15, 1920, pp. 3-4). The report contrasted the

SSM position with the cooperative attitude of all classes and trade union officials to aid the government with war-trade (Ibid, p. 5).

The Ministry of Labour discovered that probably the first crucial action of shop stewards as an independent organisation occurred in a conference organised by the Executive and District Committee in Glasgow, where shop stewards withdrew from the Labour Committee and became known as the Central Withdrawal of Labour Control Committee, that took permanent shape under the name of Clyde Workers' Committee (Ibid, p. 8). After that, shop stewards continued forming workers' committees in the shops, to be represented in the District Committees – organisation of shop stewards of a whole town or industrial area (Ibid, p. 9).

The Ministry of Labour identified that after the Shop Stewards' Movement had developed its organisation nationwide, in 1917, it set to enlarge its industrial policy to revolt against the whole industrial system. Many rank-and-file showed no interest in far-reaching industrial and political programmes; although such programmes were desirable, several workers were only ready to act for quite definite and immediate ends (Ibid, p. 12). The Ministry of Labour showed surprise that although the Shop Stewards' Movement had criticised centralisation, it ended up centralising itself and that despite criticising trade union officials for becoming out of touch with the rank-and-file, it eventually drifted apart from their constituents and the shops, focusing instead on organising the national movement (Ibid, p. 21).

Some trade unions resisted the strengthening of the shop stewards' committees. For example, the chairman of the local trade unions' Joint Committee in Coventry refused to recognise the local shop stewards' committee. However, the Ministry of Munitions encouraged the trade unions to recognise the unofficial committee as representatives of the rank-and-file. Another example is the Engineering Employers' Federation, which in November 1917 agreed with 13 trade unions to recognise the unions' right to elect shop stewards and recognise the

shop stewards' new status for bargaining. This contrasted with the Minister of Labour's attitudes to not receive deputations from shop stewards unless introduced by the trade unions' officials (TNA LAB 2/697/15, 1920, p. 16).

In May 1917, the Intelligence and Record Section of the Ministry of Munitions warned that the shop stewards' movement was agitating against trade unionism not merely as an individual institution but as nationwide machinery (TNA MUN 5/54/300/105, *Notes on the Shop Stewards' Movement*, 1917). The Ministry of Munitions realised that the SSM was seeking to strengthen the trade union officials' hands to take over their power later and that labour organisations were absorbing elements of the Shop Stewards' Movement that would result in the general setting up of shop committees. The Ministry of Munitions dismissed the allegations about a hidden hand behind the Shop Stewards' Movement. Still, it recognised that it was influenced by pacifists, the No-Conscription Fellowship and the Union of Democratic Control (Ibid).

In November 1917, the Ministry of Munitions sought to develop a plan to eliminate workers' committees, which could help preserve good employers/employee relations without interfering with employers' or trade unions' legitimate functions. To avoid losing control of the situation at any given moment, the Ministry of Munitions proposed that the workers' committees should remain individually attached to each work establishment according to its particular requirements to avoid general amalgamations. The committees should be small and consist of workpeople's representatives (divided by department), without executive powers and limited to matters concerning the particular establishment instead of issues of principle or national questions. Had there been different departments in one shop, those should be separated, and a central committee introduced to represent each worker's committee. The highest value envisaged of workers' committees was to connect the management and the

workpeople to investigate and ventilate grievances before they became larger (TNA MUN 5/54/300/105, *Notes on the Shop Stewards' Movement*, 1917, p. 2).

In 1919, the Ministry of Labour's intelligence division envisaged that the Shop Stewards' Movement – an organisation against the capitalist industrial organisation – would become a more effective industrial apparatus (TNA LAB 2/697/15, 1919, p. 33). This was partly because the old trade union machinery no longer reflected the national industrial structure, stimulating more and more regional and local bargaining, where negotiation took place directly with workers' delegates, rather than with the centralised officialism (Ibid).

The year 1919 saw the disappearance and weakening of many workers' committees in England, compared to Scotland, where they strengthened their position. The second half of 1919 and the whole of 1920 saw the movement recovering and the centre of activity moving from the local communities to the national organisation – primarily through the Scottish Workers' Committee – leaving many workers' committees to gradually cease to function as coordinating organs and instead to become militant propaganda and political centres. In 1921, the movement acquired a new constitution, which changed its name from Shop Stewards' and Workers' Committee Movement to National Workers' Committee Movement (SSM) and formally united – in a subordinated fashion – to the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and supplied most of its most prominent leaders. However, that very year represented the definite decline of the movement because unemployment – fostered by the rundown of munitions production – hit unofficial workshop organisation, which was used by employers as an excellent excuse to dismiss the leading shop stewards like Jack Murphy (Privicevic, 1982, pp. 103-105; Darlington, 1998, p. 50; Hinton, 1973, p. 14).

3.1.2.- The organisations of former servicemen

Together with the Shop Stewards and Workers' Committee Movement, ex-servicemen's organisation preceded the formation and early days of the NUWM. When the war ended, ex-servicemen sought to return to the pre-war years of regular employment, but instead, they faced the lack of government planning that offered them no more than the limited coverage of the Munition Workers' Insurance Act of 1916. This left uncovered most industrial workers and the army with the only alternative being the Poor Law which was designed for paupers. A new scheme prepared to give out-door relief to ex-servicemen came into existence; however, its emergency character augured that it would be short-lived and insufficient in its level of assistance, primarily because of the rise of prices in the post-war years (Flanagan, 1991, p. 89). Army mutinies in early 1919 had forced the government to accelerate demobilisation, throwing many ex-servicemen onto the streets, leaving them with no job opportunities. At the peak, 170, 000 soldiers were demobilised weekly with unemployment increasing 70, 000 workers during the same period. By May 1919, there were 408, 000 ex-servicemen out of work (Ibid, p. 92). Ex-servicemen began to mobilise, some of them collecting money on the streets, while others organised politically. There were three big ex-servicemen organisations by the end of the war: the National Association of Discharged Sailors and Soldiers (NADSS), the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers (NFDDSS), and the Comrades of the Great War. The NADSS was formed in 1916 but broke-up in 1918. The largest and most powerful was the NFDDSS, constituted in 1917 and highly influenced by the Scottish Liberal MP, James Myles Hogge. Its membership was initially restricted to ranking soldiers and sailors, where officials were tolerated had they been promoted from the ranks. The rest were refused because of their middle and upper-class origin and their moderate tendencies (Ibid, p. 90). The NFDDSS affiliated with local trades councils connecting the unemployed ex-servicemen with the Shop Stewards' Movement.

Nevertheless, by mid-1919, ex-service men's discontent with the NFDDSS's admittance of any officer and its tendency towards moderation gave impetus to the Soldiers', Seamen's and Airmen's Union (SSAU), the International Union of Ex-Servicemen and Adult dependents (IUX), and the National Union of Ex-servicemen (NUX) (Flanagan, 1991, p. 96). The IUX proved more significant than the other two and anticipated the practise and ideology of the NUWM. The IUX sought class struggle beyond the factories, aiming at establishing close relations with workers' committees to form workers, sailors and soldiers' committees to take over the means of production, distribution and exchange. It was the first organisation seeking to merge the unemployed ex-servicemen with the general struggle of the working class (Ibid, p. 97). In turn, the NUX preceded the NUWM's work in the legal cases to help individuals access unemployment donations, pensions, housing, and training. Both the IUX and the NUX pioneered some form of street politics that would later be associated with the practises of the NUWM (Ibid, p. 106).

In January 1920, the Shop Stewards' Movement agreed to allow ex-servicemen organisations to affiliate with workers' committees for the first time. Later in that year, in October, the NUX collapsed as a national organisation due to an internal financial scandal. Some of its branches dissolved into local unemployed committees, like in the Coventry Unemployed Workers' Committee, while others became part of the newly created CPGB. By the end of the year, the IUX would meet a similar end to the NUX (Ibid, pp. 111-112).

3.2.- The formation of the National Unemployed Workers' Committee Movement

This section explains the formation of the NUWM and its immediate context. It draws on the last months of 1920 and the first of 1921, Wal Hannington's experiences before becoming the NUWM's national organiser, the first and second conference of the NUWM and concluding in an account of 1922.

By the end of 1920, it was quite clear to the unemployed organisations that the official labour and trade union movement would not pay enough attention to the unemployed' plight and that it would not join their fight (McShane, 1978, p. 128). Despite this, the London District Council managed to organise a Joint Committee – together with the Executive of the Labour Party, the Parliamentary Committee, and the TUC – and to set up the National Conference of Delegates from all working-class organisations in London in early 1921. The labour leaders – James Henry Thomas, Arthur Henderson and John Robert Clynes – had secured a policy away from militant action and which only condemned the government's failure upon unemployment without proposals for action (Hannington, 1977, p. 24). After these events, the organisation of the unemployed became formalised and, after some months, the unemployed workers' movement materialised. Alongside this, in December 1920, John Ross Campbell called for the national organisation of the unemployed on a national scale, after failing his attempts to diminish the independent Scottish unemployed movement – led by John McLean – that, together with the IUX, had threatened the status of the CPGB by attempting to form an independent Scottish Communist Party. From early January 1921, the London District Council began to organise a national unemployed movement, a decision that would ultimately lead to the establishment of the NUWM (Flanagan, 1991, p. 127).

The Home Office's Directorate of Intelligence produced a weekly Report of Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, with a detailed record of meetings and identifying relevant individuals. In early 1921, before the NUWM's foundation, the Home Office highlighted that unemployment continued to grow nationally and that the unemployed were listening more attentively to communist speakers, with worrying cases like the unemployed engineers in Coventry, the formation of an Unemployed Workers' Committee in Lancaster, and George Lansbury's call to direct action (TNA CAB 24/119/42, 5th February 1921). Activity in South Wales, Glasgow, and Dundee was continuously tracked. The London

District Council of Unemployed Organisations remained a particular worry for the Home Office. This government department claimed the organisation of the unemployed was dominated by communists (TNA CAB 24/120/67, 3rd March 1921), represented extremists (TNA CAB 24/119/75, 10th February 1921), and was anxious to affiliate as many of the Suburban Unemployed Committees as possible (TNA CAB 24/120/3, 17th February 1921). The Home Office showed some relief from the fact that the National Conference of the Labour Party and Trade Union Congress voted against direct action and refused to allow a delegation of unemployed to address them (TNA CAB 24/120/31, 24th February 1921).

It is worth noting the continued worry highlighted in the Reports of Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom regarding the progress of British communism through the unemployed movement. Several reports mentioned the improvement of communist organisation among the out-of-work and acknowledged Moscow's control upon it (Ibid; TNA CAB 24/120/99, 10th March 1921; CAB 24/120/99, 10th March 1921; CAB 24/127/19, 11th August 1921), though not without some resistance (CAB 24/123/86, 27th May 1921). The government's proposal to stop this was "a species of trade union reaction" (TNA CAB 24/120/31, 24th February 1921). This is relevant for the thesis's argument because it explicitly suggests the state's strategy was to use the trade unions as a shield against the advance of communist organisations in Britain.

The first conference of the national organisation of the unemployed and foundational step of the formation of the NUWM took place on April 15th, 1921, at the International Socialist Club, City Road, Hoxton, in east London (Hannington, 1977, p. 28). On Hannington's initiative and through the *Daily Herald*, the London District Council of Unemployed called all unemployed groups to attend this conference (Kingsford, 1982, p. 19; Katz, 2001, p. 73; Watson, 2014, p. 28). The conference recognised that unemployment was more than a local question and that regional and nation machinery was needed to aid the unemployed to

coordinate and lead unemployed struggles (Hannington, 1977, p. 28) under a movement with a federal structure, leaving a reasonable degree of autonomy to its local organisations (Katz, 2001, p. 73). The conference set to organise the unemployed workers towards the aim of abolishing capitalism, the cause of unemployment; to aid themselves to find employment in the trades with which they were already associated; to demand local authorities and government boards to provide relief for the unemployed and their dependents; and to pressure the national government to sign a Trade Agreement with Russia and to recognise the Soviet Government (Watson, 2014, p. 28). The conference decided to make the district journal *Out of Work* (later *New Charter*) its national newspaper (Katz, 2001, p. 73; Watson, 2014, p. 29), and to establish its headquarters in London (Hannington, 1938, p. 29). This first conference of the NUWM also requested an increase in rates of benefit to 36s. for workers and their partners; 5s. for each child up to 16 years old; rent up to 15s. a week, plus one cwt (hundredweight) of coal – some 50kg – or its equivalent in gas for single workers from 18 years onwards; and 15s. for single workers aged 16-18 (Hannington, 1977, p. 29; Watson, 2014, p. 28). "Work of full maintenance at trade-union rates of wages" was established as the primary demand of the movement and the national officials were elected: Percy Haye became the movement's national secretary, Jack Holt its chairman, and Wal Hannington, its national organiser (Hannington, 1977, p. 29). Of the three of them, the latter would be the only one who remained at the forefront of the unemployed workers' movement throughout its almost two decades of existence.

In 1919, Hannington lost a short-term job as a tool turner at Bick in West London and was contacted by the London communist Bob Lovell – later the secretary of the International Class War Prisoners' Aid – who invited him, together with Tom Dingley (former member of the NUX), to work in the engine-fitting shop at Slough Transport Depot to strengthen the fight for a militant shop stewards' organisation against the companies' reactionary shop stewards' committee (Hannington, 1977, pp. 1-2). There, Hannington and Dingley began organising the

workers through talks with militant trade unionists during the dinner hours, planning propaganda and defining agitation plans. Soon after, both became shop stewards at Slough Transport Depot and sought to incorporate to the SSM. Dingley became convener and Hannington chairman of the whole worker's committee of Slough Transport Depot. Still, soon after the company closed, Hannington became unemployed once again, only now with the aggravating aspect of being on the blacklist of the Engineering Employers' Federation's militant workers. He would later find a job for a short period in a factory in Hendon, only to be fired and become unemployed for an extended period (Hannington, 1977, p. 9). It was then that he joined the local unemployed organisation in St. Pancras, where he worked to build an all-London Council of Unemployed that would later become, in October 1920, the London District Council of Unemployed Organisations. Hannington was elected the London organiser, Jack Holt chairman, and Percy Haye secretary. All three of them were engineers with experience in the Shop Stewards' Movement (Ibid, p. 18).

The first conference of the NUWM was closely followed by the Home Office's Directorate of Intelligence in the following manner: a national conference of unemployed organisations representing in the main the unemployables was held at the International Socialist Club, with the attendance of a hundred delegates from London and the provinces (TNA CAB 24/122/38, 14th April 1921). The conference passed resolutions demanding work or full maintenance for the wholly or partially unemployed at trade union rates, the immediate operation of the trading agreement with Russia, action to relieve unemployment and the immediate recognition of the Soviet government. Given the organisation's financial position, it was decided not to establish a National Administrative Council (Ibid). The new organisation of the unemployed divided the United Kingdom into regions: the South (London, Gravesend, Bristol, Margate, Plymouth, Exeter, Southampton); the North (Manchester, York, Hull, Westmorland, Durham, Cumberland, Northumberland, Southport); the East (Norwich,

Norfolk, Cambridge, Suffolk, Essex, Bedford, Lincoln, Luton); the West (Gloucester, Worcester, Cheshire, Shropshire, Hereford, Monmouth); and the Centre (Birmingham, Stafford, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham, Northampton, Coventry and Smethwick) (CAB 24/123/86, 27th May 1921).

By mid-1921, the Home Office's Directorate of Intelligence showed awareness of the signs of effervescence created by workers who had been unemployed for some months, even when unemployment overall had been decreasing, especially in London where "extremist are trying to arrange demonstrations and marches and speakers are urging that the only cure for unemployment is the overthrow of the capitalist system" (TNA CAB 24/126/39, 14th July 1921). On July 11th, a demonstration of unemployed workers walked towards London, where the Minister of Labour accepted to receive a delegation of the NUWM. The Directorate of Intelligence focused on speeches happening in Hyde Park rather than on the meeting itself, which was reported as a "protest against the reduction of the dole to 15s" (Ibid). Wal Hannington remembered that the deputation was received courteously by the Minister, Dr McNamara and members of his staff, who sought to justify the reduction in benefit scales by stating that the Unemployment Insurance Fund needed to be made solvent and that the effect in suffering and misery which it imposed was out of their consideration (Hannington, 1967, p. 104). The deputation pointed out that their concern was of a human problem and not merely a financial one and exemplified the Government's capacity to find ways to meet economic emergency with the 8 million pounds daily spent during the war (Ibid, p. 105). The deputation considered the meeting a failure as the best they got was the Minister's promise to give further consideration to the case (Ibid).

The Home Office recorded communist activity in detail. The CPGB's interest in the unemployed and the South Wales' miners and the likelihood of continuity of unemployment increased the government's concerns about increasing communist organisation in the coalfields

(TNA CAB 24/126/55, 21st July 1921). This contrasted with a general peaceful aspect of labour, that resisted the incitements of agitators, though it was doubtful whether they would remain so when facing the winter ahead (TNA CAB 24/127/53, 18th August 1921). Soon after, the activity of the London District Council of Unemployed Organisations increased the government's concerns. The reports of the Directorate of Intelligence spoke about unemployed activity in London as a very grave development, with crowds of workless men marching to the Guardians demanding out-door relief under communist leadership, and influencing unemployed committees in various provinces like Bethnal Green, Camberwell, Islington, Bermondsey, Holborn, Finsbury, and Clerkenwell, rooted in George Lansbury's call to "go to the Guardians", which would prove an intolerable burden to the ratepayers (TNA CAB-24-127-80, 1st September 1921). The report suggested that the London District Council was a branch of the International Federation of Unemployed which had groups in Italy, France, Switzerland, Belgium and Germany, following orders from Soviet Russia and with the object of preparing the unemployed for the World Revolution. Probably for the first time in these reports, we can see the name of Wal Hannington, recognised as a London organiser of the unemployed and linked to the CPGB. Additionally, there were worries about communist activity among the unemployed in Birmingham and Lancashire, about the growing exasperation among ex-servicemen in Liverpool and Manchester, and on the mobilisations in Glasgow, linked to the propaganda of John McLean and his unemployed committee (Ibid).

In September 1921, unemployed agitation continued. The National Administrative Council of Unemployed Organisations, with headquarters at the International Socialist Club, seemed to be working feverishly to organise the unemployed. The London District Council seemed to be active in all parts of the city (TNA CAB 24/127/98, 9th September 1921), with more and more evidence of Russian inspiration behind British communism and the unemployed struggles and influence of the International Union of Unemployed (TNA CAB

24/128/9, 15th September 1921). In September 1921, the Home Office identified the members of the National Executive of the NUWM: Wal Hannington, organiser of the London District Council of Unemployed, an avowed revolutionary, very active among the London unemployed recently. P. Haye, a member of the London Workers' Committee and Hands-Off Russia Committee, member of revolutionary movements in 1919, associated with the unemployed movement and elected secretary of the National Administrative Council in April. Holt, chairman of the National Administrative Council and London District Council of Unemployed, advocated the adoption of forcing tactics by the London unemployed. Jennett, involved in a riot of discharged soldiers and sailors, who apparently served in the army and later deserted, and active in the Sailors' Soldiers' and Airmen's Union in 1919. And Squair, a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, chairman of the International Socialist Club, member of the CPGB and the London Workers' Committee (Ibid). The unemployed's organisation continued showing progress with the national committee controlling about one hundred committees in the provinces and over thirty in the London area (TNA CAB 24/128/32, 22nd September 1921). Unconfirmed rumours raised suspicion about the London District Council of Unemployed making enquiries among its members, especially among ex-servicemen, to ascertain if any had arms, or tools such as braces, drills and spanners (TNA CAB 24/128/49, 30th September 1921). This connection of the unemployed ex-servicemen with the London District Council at this early stage of the history of the unemployed movement is worth noting, especially to be remembered later (chapter 5) in connection with the government's efforts to link the Mutiny in Invergordon in 1931 with the communists and the unemployed movement.

In early October 1921, the Home Office's reports noted a series of worrying events regarding the unemployed mobilisations. The most important were: the formation of seventeen unemployed committees in Birmingham; the communist domination of the unemployed organisations in Newcastle, Sunderland, and Dundee; and the lack of effect of John McLean's

imprisonment to stop the proliferation of unemployed demonstrations in Glasgow, led by McShane, Duffy and Dundas (TNA CAB 24/128/79, 6th October 1921). During the same month, a demonstration of the unemployed in London requested a deputation to be received by the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, who refused and instead instructed a member of the Cabinet Committee on Unemployment to meet unemployed representatives (TNA CAB 24/129/8, 14th October 1921; Hannington, 1967, p. 114). Hannington remembered that in the council chamber there was Sir Alfred Mond, Minister of Health; the Minister of Labour, Dr McNamara; Mr Short, Home Secretary; Sir. Griffiths-Boscawen, Minister of Agriculture; Sir. Lloyd-Graeme, Director of Overseas Trade; Mr Haworth, Assistant Secretary of the Cabinet; and Mr Wicks, Secretary of the Cabinet Unemployment Committee (Hannington, 1967, p. 115). Hannington remembered that the unemployed delegation was allowed to speak freely, and they got the impression that their opinions were listened attentively and noted by the government's representatives. By the end of the meeting, Alfred Mond promised that the Cabinet would give careful consideration to the case and that a statement would be made in the House of Commons after Parliament was reassembled some days later, however, he could not yet provide a definite reply to their claims (work or full maintenance and a government's national work scheme at trade union rates). However, when the deputation left Whitehall, hopeful that something positive would result from the meeting, they realised that, while they were gathered with the Cabinet Committee, the police had beaten the demonstrators (Ibid). The Home Office registered the event as an unsuccessful demonstration organised by communists which ended up in some disorder and few arrests and attributed the lack of more disturbance to the adequate police preparation (TNA CAB 24/129/8, 14th October 1921). Some days later, Parliament reassembled, and the Government announced its will to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act to increase weekly allowances from November 10th, which marked the beginning of dependent's benefit (Hannington, 1967, p. 116).

In late November 1921, the NUWM held its second conference at Gorton Hall in Manchester. The Home Office registered that 106 delegates representing unemployed committees attended (TNA CAB 24/131/26, 1st December 1921); some other accounts suggest that 90 local committees sent 140 representatives, although 50 others went underrepresented due to a lack of funds (Katz, 2001, p. 75). The Home Office reported that the conference agreed that the NUWM's National Administrative Council should issue a questionnaire to the candidates for election to Trades Councils, Boards of Guardians and local Councils, and advise local unemployed which candidates were supporting their national demands. The following officials were elected to function on the NAC from the beginning of 1922: Jack Holt as Chairman; Percy Haye as Secretary; Wal Hannington as National Organiser; Lily Thring as National Women's Organiser; and Squair as Treasurer (TNA CAB 24/131/26, 1st December 1921). Hannington recalled the conference at Manchester as a genuinely representative conference that packed the Town Hall with delegates from all over Britain, including a strong section from Scotland which had not been represented at the first conference (Hannington, 1977, p. 118). At this conference, the structure, rules, policy, and the name of the NUWM were officially approved. The movement was to be constituted from local branches, district committees, divisional committees and the National Administrative Council (NAC) to coordinate them all. Individual members would be issued with a membership card and pay 1d. per week at their local branch, which would finance the movement at all levels, together with the income from the newspaper's purchase *Out of work*. The conference agreed on a policy of militant action to channel the resentment to the trade unions and the Labour Party for their attitudes towards unemployment, but seeking a united working-class strategy to establish the closest possible relationship with the labour and trade union movement, through the application of all NUWM's branches to their local Trades Councils (Ibid, p. 119).

The NUWM ended its first year of existence as a national organisation of coordinated committees. Their activity had mostly focused on influencing the Boards of Guardians' decisions to increase the relief to the unemployed workers and seeking hearings with Cabinet members to discuss a national policy of unemployment relief. The unemployed mobilisations had attracted the Home Office's attention, which dedicated a section for the unemployed workers' movement in its weekly reports on revolutionary organisations. The following section draws on the first NUWM's approaches to the trade union movement, particularly through the TUC General Council, between 1922 and 1925.

3.3.- The relationship between the NUWM and the TUC during the early years

The year 1922 was crucial for the unemployed workers' movement. That year unemployment decreased nationally, and it began concentrating in the traditional heavy industries. That circumstance allowed the NUWM to continue its national consolidation process; however, it suffered its first crisis, which ended up in the first national hunger march to London and the first step towards affiliation with the Trade Union Congress. The NUWM remained a federation of heterodox committees locally organised depending on each district's necessities and resources, and pursuing different policies. However, all of them shared the same belief in left militancy and the mission to aid the unemployed workers to get either work or full maintenance at trade unions' rates. In March that year, the engineers' national lockout allowed the unemployed workers' movement to alter and extend its organisation to participate in industrial struggles on a national scale. The alliance built with the engineers faced the opposition of the Amalgamated Engineering Union's leadership, and many of its members, however, succeeded in areas like Sheffield, Barrow, and parts of London. The organisation of the1922 Hunger March seemed to draw attention away from the local work of the movement and reduced the communities affiliated to the movement (by April 1923 London and

surroundings had lost around 40% of its affiliated communities, the Midlands 75%, and Lancashire close to 70%). But, on the other hand, it gave – at least – the illusion of collaboration with the TUC (Flanagan, 1991, pp. 149-156).

Throughout its existence, the NUWM sought a formal alliance with the TUC – the federation of trade unions in Britain and old-established parliament of the labour movement (Mowat, 1968, p. 19). The TUC was coordinated by the General Council – the Parliamentary Committee before 1920 – and was composed of thirty-two members, divided into eighteen groups, the first seventeen based upon industry and the last a separate women's section (Shaw, 1979, p. 9). Throughout the interwar years, the Congress remained dominated numerically by five unions: Miners, Engineers, Railwaymen, and two amalgamations, the Transport and General Workers and the General and Municipal Workers. It proved difficult to organise and include the workers of the new industries because of their remote location and diverse type of labour, so the traditional craft unions remained a significant influence upon the TUC, despite the TUC's shift away from the skilled craftsmen unions towards unions of general labourers (Ibid, p. 8). While by 1918 the TUC was an annual forum to discuss trade unions' affairs, minimally staffed, and with little coordinating power, it later acquired more influence and standing. Its leadership's control managed to survive the threat posed by the Triple Alliance, the Industrial Alliance, and the General Strike of 1926, while its membership suffered unemployment, dilution and victimisation. Nevertheless, the General Council lacked the power and authority to lead the trade union movement effectively during the whole interwar period (Ibid, p. 4), partly because the unions defended a degree of autonomy and because the government's industrial policies were based on particular industrial sectors and concerns, instead of general matters (Ibid, p. 32).

The TUC's approach to unemployment during the interwar period had two edges: on the one hand, with the Labour Party, based on the restoration of trade to the pre-war patterns,

which implied a change in the Government's attitude towards both Germany and Russia, and public works to provide work to the workless. On the other hand, the TUC accepted to collaborate with the NUWM for a short period and in a limited fashion (Shaw, 1979, p. 40). In late December 1922, the NUWM's officials met with the General Council of the TUC and agreed to organise a national protest, known as *Unemployed Sunday*, which took place in early January 1923. This was the first time the NUWM managed to do something together with the TUC (Flanagan, 1991, pp. 156-157). However, this first approach did not lead to a smooth relationship between the two organisations. The General Council kept the NUWM at a distance and forced it to a supplicant position (Harmer, 1987, p. 84). Only after delegates of the TUC protested against the General Council's attitude and instructed it to take steps to provide closer cooperation with the unemployed workers' movement, did the council accept to establish a Joint Advisory Committee on Unemployment at the TUC Conference in Plymouth in September 1923 (Ibid, p. 84, 88; Flanagan, 1991, pp. 156-157).

In late January 1923, the NUWM submitted proposals to the TUC General Council seeking a closer relationship (MRC MSS.292/135.01/5, 29th January 1923). The NUWM called to set up a Joint Committee, composed of six members, with equal representation from the TUC and the NUWM, to enable the trade union movement to establish unemployed committees, where such were not already in existence, and to assist in the re-establishment of them where they had become defunct, to be under the jurisdiction of the NUWM, and to place upon the agenda of the next conference of the TUC the question of the affiliation of the NUWM to the Congress (Ibid). As a response, the TUC Unemployment Sub Committee – composed of Williams in the chair and Bramley as assistant secretary – made a series of recommendations to the TUC General Council. First, it suggested a closer relationship between the two bodies through the General Council agency. Second, to set up a Joint Advisory Council that would be authorised to prepare plans for joint action as considered necessary, but without incurring

financial responsibilities, other than incidental expenditure in connection with the committee work, and not to issue any statement as representing the General Council without first being approved by the Council (MRC MSS.292/135.01/5, 29th January 1923). Third, that the General Council would issue a circular advising local Trades and Labour Councils to cooperate with the NUWM, to call for public attention to the unemployed problem and collaborate in representations made to public bodies on all matters relating unemployment (Ibid). And lastly, the TUC Unemployment Sub Committee encouraged trade unions to retain their unemployed members in full benefit, to aid them to join the NUWM, to maintain a unified policy about the activities of unemployed workers, and to recognise the NUWM's membership card to transfer to the Unions without entrance fee when such workers obtained employment (Ibid).

In March 1923, on instructions from the General Council, a group of members of the TUC's Unemployment Sub-committee met representatives of the NUWM. Apparently, the meeting achieved little progress regarding a better approach between the TUC and the NUWM. In early September that year, the NUWM reminded the TUC's General Council their desire to obtain closer cooperation with the trade union movement and highlighted the value that unemployed activities represented to trade unionism by assisting striking trade unionists and preventing blacklegging and scabbing (MRC MSS.292/778.22/1, *Letter from the NUWM to TUCGC*, 2nd September 1923). The letter pointed that "where members of Trade Unions have been unable to draw unemployment benefit owing to the precarious condition of Union Funds, they have been able, through the Unemployed Organisation, to compel the local authorities to shoulder the responsibility of providing for them and their dependents", but despite that, some trade unions looked at them askance, probably due to a "lack of knowledge of the facts" (Ibid). While recognising the NUWM's capacity to act on its own, the unemployed workers' movement pointed at the potential benefits of closer cooperation and understanding between the TUC and the NUWM to "make the Government recognise and meet its responsibilities to the

unemployed workers of this country" (MRC MSS.292/778.22/1, *Letter from the NUWM to TUCGC*, 2nd September 1923). The unemployed workers' movement reiterated the points proposed since the beginning of the year: direct affiliation of the NUWM to the TUC; the setting up of the Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) representative of the TUC's General Council and the NUWM's National Administrative Council; and to assist the trade union movement to establish unemployed committees, where such are not already in existence, and to assist in the re-establishment of them where they had become defunct, to be under the jurisdiction of the NUWM (Ibid).

The JAC of the NUWM and the TUC met for the first time on 10th January 1924 (MRC MSS.292/135.01/5, *First meeting of the Joint Unemployment Advisory Committee representing the TUC General Council and the NUWM*, 10th January 1924). On the NUWM's side was Holt, Horner, Straker, and Haye, and on the TUC's, Tillett, M. P. (chair), Findlay, and Bramley. The NUWM representatives submitted proposals for an Unemployed Workers' Charter containing the following points. Firstly, work or effective maintenance for all unemployed workers, to be wholly dissociated from Poor Law administration. Secondly, the immediate development of government schemes of employment to absorb the unemployed in their trades at trade union rates of wages and conditions. Thirdly, the establishment of state workshops to supply the necessary service of commodities to meet government departments' requirements. Fourthly, the reduction in the hours of labour required to absorb unemployed workers. Fifthly, the establishment of occupational training centres for unemployed workers, providing proper training with effective maintenance, particularly for unemployed boys and girls and non-disabled ex-servicemen. And sixthly, the provision of suitable housing accommodation at rents within the means of wage-earners, and the proper use of existing houses (Ibid). This was accepted and adopted in full. The NUWM's representatives requested to be paid for their participation in the joint committee, which was recommended to the General Council by the

TUC's part of the committee and later accepted; 12.6 s would be paid to each NUWM member for their attendance to each meeting (MRC MSS.292/135.01/5, *Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee*, 5th March, 1924). In that same meeting, in March 1924, the NUWM's representatives proposed that, during periods of depression, trade unionists should not be allowed to drift out of their membership, that their membership should be retained and activities maintained to provide a reservoir from which new recruits to the trade union movement could be drawn. It also suggested that trade unions exempted unemployed members from contributions and encouraged them to join the unemployed workers' movement (Ibid). The General Council's representatives – as it was to be a constant for the rest of the joint committee's life – stated that the matter was one which required cautious consideration and would probably have to be referred to the General Council before any statement could be made by them, as important questions of TU policy were raised (Ibid).

At the JAC's meeting in April 1924, the TUC's representatives informed that the General Council had refused the proposal of the unemployed workers' movement regarding trade union recognition of the unemployed workers' membership cards, because it could mean an interference with the functions of the individual trade unions (MRC MSS.292/135.01/5, *Minutes of the 6th meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee*, 29th April, 1924). The unemployed workers' representatives disclaimed any intention to interfere and contended that the proposal's sole object was to establish a link between unemployed workers and the trade union movement (Ibid). At the same meeting, it was agreed to prepare a special joint deputation to be received by ministers of the Government to present a series of grievances, in line with the traditional NUWM's proposals. Nevertheless, the General Council would later decide to send only representatives of the TUC, to which Hannington protested during the JAC meeting in July, which ended up in the agreement to request the General Council to reconsider the subject and allow representatives drawn from the NUWM (MRC MSS.292/135.01/5, *Minutes of the 10th*

meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee, 11th July 1924). This was finally accepted by the General Council and announced in the meeting of the JAC in August, with the constraint that only two members of the NUWM would accompany the deputation (MRC MSS.292/135.01/5, *Minutes of the 11th meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee*, 15th August 1924).

The JAC between the TUC and the NUWM continued its operations until 1927 when the TUC General Council decided to end it (see next chapter). The unemployed workers' movement could deliver nothing because it could never manage to go further than the General Council wanted (Harmer, 1987, p. 121). The minutes of the meetings (MRC MSS.292/135.01/5) are a testimony to the irrelevant discussions between the two organisations' representatives. Every time the NUWM's representatives proposed something that implied further collaboration on the side of the TUC or that had implications for the structure and day-to-day activities of the trade unions, the response from the TUC's side was the same, that it needed to be evaluated by the General Council, which rarely agreed. In the summer of 1925, the TUC and the Labour Party convened a National Conference on Unemployment in London. They decided to set up a Joint Committee on Unemployment, that was more concerned with benefits than with strategies to reduce unemployment rates, under the understanding that unemployment, while regrettable, could be tolerated if benefits were adequate (Harmer, 1987, p. 122). The last occasion in which a member of the NUWM was invited to TUC activity occurred in the same summer when the TUC organised a Special Trade Union Conference on Unemployment (Shaw, 1979, p. 46). For it, the NUWM prepared a programme with proposals including a national march to London, a 24-hour general strike, and a parliamentary obstruction campaign by Labour parliamentarians, which was to be declined. Hannington was allowed to give a 15-minutes speech on behalf of the unemployed workers' movement. He was openly critical of the resolutions of the Trade Union Congress – which had only recommended the restoration of foreign trade, especially with Russia – asserted the right to work or maintenance,

criticised government proposals for the extension of the waiting period to receive relief, and encouraged trade unions and labour organisations to exert pressure upon the Government to take steps to remedy the critical situation (Shaw, 1979, p. 50). The criticisms of Hannington and other members of the unemployed workers' movement upset many in the Trade Union Congress.

3.4.- The state's reaction to the NUWM's activities during the first half of the 1920s

During the first year of existence of the NUWM, the national government refused to accept deputations from the movement, displayed aggressive police responses against unemployed demonstrations – especially near emblematic power sites like Whitehall – and accepted only temporary and minimal concessions in the unemployment relief system, all the time tracking their activities through the Directorate of Intelligence of the Home Office. Nevertheless, the day-to-day contact of the NUWM to the state was in the local level through the Boards of Guardians – organisations established by the Poor Law Amendment Act 1834, composed of locally elected administers of the poor relief among other duties, such as the management of Poor Law Unions – to pressure for higher scales of relief and to protest against the task work scheme – that placed tasks to unemployed workers as a condition to receive out-door-relief. The contact with the national authorities was minimal and considerably far from the connection developed during the 1930s. The relationship between the NUWM's local branches and the local guardians varied from place to place. Hannington recalled that, while there was normally a bitter struggle with them, for example in Woolwich where the local board refused to meet unemployed deputations, in cases like Poplar, a friendly feeling existed between the guardians and the unemployed (Hannington, 1977, p. 53, 56). This differential relationship depended on the decentralisation of unemployment relief administration that provided boards with a degree of flexibility to accept or refuse the relief and determine the amount due. During these years,

the local administration of unemployment relief allowed a degree of negotiation between the claimants and the guardians, which took place sometimes in the town halls or the workhouses of each locality. The unemployed deputations developed different methods to put pressure on the boards' members to obtain the scales required. In Woolwich, in February 1922, for example, the unemployed deputation locked members of the board of guardians in the workhouse to force them to debate the terms of the relief, though the police managed to get their way in to clear the room by force (Hannington, 1977, p. 56). The Minister of Health sought to discipline the local authorities to rectify their position and provide for the claimants, not the full trade-union rates, but only the work schemes for the unemployed, 75% of the trade-union standard (Ibid, p. 60).

During the 1920s, the national government in Britain was led by Lloyd George, during the last months of the second coalition government (1918-1922). Then there was the brief period of Bonar Law (October 1922-May 1923), the first period in office of Stanley Baldwin (May 1923-January 1924), the months of the first and short Labour Government under Ramsay MacDonald (January-November 1924) and then a more stable period in office for Stanley Baldwin (1924-1929). After centuries of opposition, the Conservative and Liberal parties had for some years coincided on a series of questions against the figure of the newly created Labour Party, despite that their policies were not completely opposed. However, in early 1920s, Bonar Law pressed for the end of the coalition with the Liberals so that the Conservative Party could preserve its unity and moderation (Mowat, 1968, p. 132). The coalition dissolved and the resultant elections gave a majority to the Conservative Party, led by Bonar Law, and demonstrated that the Liberal Party had weakened from the division between those who supported Lloyd George and those who supported Asquith. The election also undoubtedly proved the Labour Party's advance, which achieved seats for the next generation of Labour

members of Parliament: MacDonald, Clynes, Thomas, Snowden, Jowett, Lansbury, and Webb (Mowat, 1968, p. 144).

Bonar Law's government faced the first National Hunger March and the mobilisations in London organised by the NUWM from October 1922 to February 1923. The government's aggression against the unemployed mobilisations included not only the use of the police but also an "incessant campaign of vilification, calumny and misinterpretation" in the press (WCML 30017213/AG, *The Insurgents in London. Brief of the Great National Hunger March of the Unemployed on London*, 1923). This combined with government claims that they had welcomed the march, for example, by issuing the stories of individuals who were in London, claiming that they were leaders of the Movement, when in fact they were in no way connected with it (Ibid). The movement complained about the Prime Minister's attitude, who refused to receive a delegation and instead asked the Minister of Labour, Montague Barlow, and the Minister of Health, Griffith Boscawen, to meet the movement's representatives. The movement refused because they were seeking an integral answer from the Executive's head, and not ministers who would have only offered to place the requests to the Prime Minister "for his most careful and earnest consideration" (Ibid, p.11). The NUWM also criticised the Minister of Labour's attitude towards the marchers – who manipulated the National Unemployed Scheme to remove their unemployment benefits to which they were entitled – and the Minister of Health's response – who coerced local authorities on the road and in London to impose a diet. That said, the movement was able to claim credit for stopping the Government attack on the unemployed's status by introducing detrimental legislation (Ibid, p. 15). The NUWM concluded that:

> *"By Bonar Law's refusal to meet us, he not only displayed a pig-headedness and a pretended dignity which made him look ridiculous, but he furnished us with the opportunity of extending the activity into five calendar months, which greatly upset his ideas of tranquillity, sharpening the conflict on the floor of the House of Commons, and*

> *continually keeping the problem of unemployment to the forefront"* (WCML 30017213/AG, *The Insurgents in London. Brief of the Great National Hunger March of the Unemployed on London*, 1923, p. 16).

Due to falling ill with cancer, the Conservative Party shifted support to Stanley Baldwin as a substitute to Bonar Law. Baldwin made few changes to his predecessor's working manner, but the negative economic outlook by 1923 and the unexpected protective policies implemented by his government forced him to dissolve Parliament in November that year. Elections took place in December bringing for the first time the Labour Party into power with a moderate cabinet representative of the middle and upper classes and, apparently, far from the trade unions – only five out of twenty members of the Cabinet were trade unionists (Mowat, 1968, p. 172).

The Labour government returned to a policy of orthodox free trade and some subsidies, for example for house building and mine owners, however, it did not manage to deliver substantial changes. By the autumn, the Labour government had to dissolve Parliament and call again for elections. Facing this new election, the NUWM issued a Manifesto (WCML 30017213/AG, *General Election. Manifesto of the NUWM*, 1924), where it explained that they could not support any Tory or Liberal candidate, as they represented class enemies. While pledging their support for the Labour candidates, they demanded a new Labour Government to pursue a more aggressive and determined policy on unemployment than the previous, which, while carrying through some small measures on behalf of the unemployed, "neglected to wage a vigorous fight against unemployment, and its attendant evils" to win the sympathy of the middle class (Ibid).

The Conservatives won the elections by a vast majority and remained in power for the following five years (Ibid, p. 187). The new Conservative government appointed figures who would be significant for the management of unemployment and industrial discontent in the remaining years of the decade: Winston Churchill as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Neville

Chamberlain as Minister of Health and Arthur Steel-Maitland as Minister of Labour. The new government blamed unemployment on a lack of competitiveness in Britain's export industries and forced prices down, with the effect of reducing wages, for example in coalmining (Harmer, 1987, p. 115). This administration's critical decision was the return to the Gold Standard in 1925, proposed by Churchill, seeking the restoration of pre-war conditions. The Gold Standard restoration was based on the expectation that British and US prices were close to parity (a government estimate of only 2.5% discrepancy compared to Keynes´s estimations of close to 10%). It was expected that this system would bring better competitiveness to the British markets – based on a financial dogma that saw the Gold Standard as an automatic regulator of the economy. Nevertheless, the overvaluation of the British pound forced export prices down, which resulted in a reduction of wages and further unemployment (Mowat, 1968, p. 199, 268; Moggridge, 1972, p. 87; Reynolds, 2000, p. 106).

From 1923, the NUWM suffered from a lack of leadership after Hannington travelled for some months to Russia to attend the Red International of Labour Unions activities. The unemployed workers' movement saw its impact diminished after the implementation of the "Mond scale" – the standardisation of relief scales nationally – in 1922, and the reduction in unemployment figures (from 17% in 1921 to 14.3% in 1922, 11.7% in 1923, 10.3% in 1924, and 11.3% in 1925) (Garside, 1990, p. 5). In the 4th NUWM Conference in Sheffield in December 1924, the movement agonised; the leaders who had led the movement during its first years were leaving or had already gone: Percy Haye resigned as secretary, Harry McShane travelled to Canada, Tom Dingley was already out of the movement, and Wal Hannington had been transferred to the NMM established in August 1924 aiming at transforming the trade unions from within (Flanagan, 1991, p. 159). This explains the few records of this period concerning the state's attitudes to the unemployed workers' movement. The Directorate of Intelligence during 1923 dedicated most of the section on the unemployed workers´ movement

of its report on revolutionary organisations to the development of a cleavage that formed a new movement of the unemployed, the Unemployed Workers' Organisation, that challenged the authority of the NUWM.

3.5.- The National Minority Movement

Alongside the first years of existence of the NUWM, the CPGB, together with the British Bureau of the RILU, created the NMM to operate inside the trade unions and win over the rank-and-file workers to join the socialist revolution and provide them with some help to overcome their day-to-day struggles at work. Since its foundation in 1920, the CPGB had sought allies and channels to penetrate the trade union movement to influence its members through the Shop Stewards' Movement and specifically through Murphy, Gallacher, Campbell and Tanner (Worley, 2002, p. 5). Nevertheless, the party needed a more systematic presence within the unions in the form of a formal movement with permanent full-time staff, and since 1922 it started working on it (Ibid).

In the Spring of 1923, the CPGB's Political Bureau was reorganised, seeking to eliminate figures who had been members of the Socialist Labour Party. New characters took over the party's central position: Pollitt became the national organiser; Gallacher and Campbell joint secretaries of the British Bureau of the RILU; and Palme Dutt, MacManus, Horner and Hannington became key party members (Martin, 1969, p. 29). During late 1923, this new leadership of the CPGB organised a series of conferences to progressively give shape to what later would be the NMM. The strategy was to build sectorial minority movements that would then unite into one national scheme. In January 1924, a national conference in Sheffield set up the first sectorial minority movement: the Miners' Minority Movement. It elected its executive committee, with Nat Watkins as its national organiser, and launched district committees in South Wales, Yorkshire, Durham, and Scotland (Martin, 1969, p. 33). Shortly after, during the

same month, Cook substituted Hodges as secretary of the Miners' Federation with the support of the new-born Miners' Minority Movement who became an important supporter of the movement (Martin, 1969). A few months later, in May 1924, the engineering workers' conference in Manchester formed the Metal Workers' Minority Movement with Hannington as its national organiser (Ibid, p. 35).

During 1924 more minority movements were formed, like the Transport Workers' Minority Movement – under the leadership of Hardy – and in August 1924, at the Memorial Hall at Farringdon Street, in London, 270 delegates representing some 200,000 workers founded the NMM, with Harry Pollitt as the national secretary, Tom Mann as the second in charge and Jack Murphy as a key figure (Martin, 1969, p. 36; Worley, 2002, p. 6; McIlroy, 2016, p. 49). Its long-term aims were to prepare for the proletarian revolution through a militant and radical programme, to win the support of the trade unions to aid the workers in emancipating themselves from capitalist oppression and exploitation, and to establish a Socialist Commonwealth (Martin, 1969, p. 37). The NMM declared its opposition to the tendency towards social peace and class collaboration and the peaceful transition to socialism (Ibid; McIlroy, 2016, p. 35). In terms of short-term aims to assist workers, the Minority Movement requested an increase of one pound in wages, a minimum wage of four pounds and a maximum of 44-hour working week with no overtime. It sought to fight against victimisation and in favour of the workers' control of industry, industrial unionism, a more influential TUC General Council with a capacity to control the Labour Party, and the affiliation of the NUWM to the TUC (Martin, 1969, p. 38; Worley, 2002, p. 6).

The structure of the NMM was similar to that of the TUC: a federation of small movements centralised in a strong authority, the Annual Conference, that met once a year during the last week of August, composed of delegates appointed by affiliated union branches, unemployed committees, trades councils and Minority Movement's groups. The Annual

Conference elected the National Executive that coordinated the movement throughout the year between the annual conferences and was composed of at least three members of the Miners, Metal and Transport Workers' Minority Movements and other members from individual industrial sections (Martin, 1969, p. 38). Although the Annual Conference was supposed to be the primary source of authority of the movement, in practise the full-time officials, members of the CPGB, seemed to be the people in charge of conducting the development of the NMM. Because the movement was an integral part of the RILU and financially dependent on the RILU and the CPGB, it could not rule itself as an autonomous entity (Ibid, p. 42). Despite this dependence on the communist institutions firmly accountable to the authorities in Moscow, the NMM embraced left-wing non-communist militants like Gossip (National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association) and Tanner (of the Amalgamated Engineering Union). Probably the peak of support for the NMM within the trade union movement occurred in the Spring of 1926 when it reached 883 delegates representing close to a million workers nationally (Worley, 2002, p. 6).

The development of the NMM had a dual impact in the first decade of existence of the NUWM. On the one hand, it represented the same principles – opposition to capitalism and a sympathetic view towards the Russian Revolution – used similar strategies – influencing the rank-and-file through militant trade unionists operating inside the trade union movement – and pursued similar outcomes – provide aid for workers in their day-to-day struggles and organise them for the workers' revolution. On the other hand, the NMM represented an obstacle to the development of the NUWM. The CPGB, envious of the development of the unemployed workers' movement, sought to replicate its successful strategies in the Minority Movement – appointing Wal Hannington as the head of the Metal Workers' Minority Movement, trying to integrate the NUWM as a section of the NMM. Nevertheless, the CPGB did not recognise that it was precisely the NUWM's relative autonomy and independence from the party – and

Moscow – its operation outside the formal labour organisations, and other factors like its reduced size, that explained the source of its capacity for adaptation and flexibility.

3.6.- A cleavage: The Unemployed Workers' Organisation

In the spring of 1923, Wal Hannington travelled to Moscow to attend the Red International of Labour Unions conference. His absence proved temporarily catastrophic for the movement, as it represented a power vacuum that disintegrated the movement and created a cleavage that ended up being a new opposition front. Gunnar Soderburg, a member of the CPGB and the IWW, and organiser of the London unemployed (Flanagam, 1991, p. 151) invited Harry McShane to run for national organiser against Hannington, though McShane refused (McShane, 1978, p. 150). In the summer of 1923, Soderburg consolidated the breakaway and formed the Unemployed Workers' Organisation as a rival to the NUWM. He gained the alliance of Sylvia Pankhurst, a driving member of the Suffragette movement and the Women's Social and Political Union, as well as the founder of the East London Federation of Suffragettes. This organisation would later become the Women's Suffrage Federation, and then the Workers' Socialist Federation, which would finally become part of the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International), later absorbed by the CPGB (from which she was later expelled for her continued support and publicization of the Workers' Opposition, the left-wing of the Russian Bolsheviks) (Flanagan, 1991, p. 157). The London unemployed committees – Poplar, Bow and Bromley, Camberwell, Edmonton, South Lambeth, Tottenham, Enfield, Ponders End, and Milwall – all left the NUWM and joined the Unemployed Workers' Organisation (Ibid, p. 158).

The NUWM cleavage was reported in the Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom during the summer of 1923 (TNA CAB 24/161/22, 12th July 1923; CAB 24/161/33; CAB 24/162/7). The Directorate of Intelligence of the Home Office took notes

about sections of the unemployed in the East End of London that had broken away from the NUWM and had formed the Workers' Unemployed Organisation. This organisation had created a manifesto that described the breakaway as a "revolt against futility" (TNA CAB 24/161/22, 12th July 1923), an outcome of the NUWM's inability to "accomplish anything approaching a better standard of living for the workers, whether employed or unemployed" (Ibid). The new organisation was under the lead of Alfred Mummery, chairman, and Soderberg, secretary. It accused the NUWM of being dominated by professional politicians, many of whom had never been workers and knew nothing of the working-class movement, which was "dividing the workers against themselves instead of uniting against the forces of capitalism" (Ibid). The Unemployed Workers' Organisation claimed that there was nothing in common between the working class and the employing class, that between them there could only be a struggle that would last until the workers organised themselves as a class, took possession of the means of production, abolished the wage system, and imposed a "rigid dictatorship of the proletariat" (Ibid). They emphasised their search was not for "work or full maintenance" but for abolishing the wage system. They refused affiliation to the Labour Party or even the CPGB, for being reformist, as well as the Trade Union Congress, and the Red International of Labour Unions for admitting trade union affiliation. The Home Office identified that the Unemployed Workers' Organisation was gaining ground and capturing many branches which were affiliated to the NUWM. It exemplified the hostility of the new organisation against the NUWM with a speech in Victoria Park, London, where the NUWM's leaders were called "opportunists who only worked for self-aggrandisement and accused them of having climbed to positions on the backs of the unemployed", and accused the unemployed workers' movement of being exploited by various political parties and mainly controlled by the CPGB (TNA CAB 24/161/33, *Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom*, 19th July 1923).

Two months later, in September 1923, the Home Office's Directorate of Intelligence stated that the NUWM was disorganised, suffering in London from the competition of the Unemployed Workers' Organisation – which claimed to have a paying membership of 1490 in London vs 1430 of the NUWM – and that the temporary absence of Hannington showed his neglect of the work among the unemployed on behalf of "making more money out of lectures" in Moscow (TNA CAB 24/161/33, *Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom*, 19th July 1923). Nevertheless, the determined efforts to pull the movement together once Hannington was back with the aid of the CPGB which had just placed two columns of the Workers' Weekly at the disposal of Hannington and Haye, added to the predictable increase of unemployment in the following months, would make the movement a disturbing factor (Ibid, p. 5). However, a month later, the NUWM seemed to be still fighting the Unemployed Workers´ Organisation, which Sylvia Pankhurst sought to bring under the lead of the Communist Workers´ Party and adopt the same tactics as the Suffragette Movement, developing continual disturbances, moving everywhere (CAB 24/162/12, *Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom*, 4th October 1923). But this impetus faced the lack of adequate funding (CAB 24/162/15, *Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom*, 11th October 1923) that, probably together with other factors, made the Unemployed Workers' Organisation crumble and disappear (Flanagan, 1991, p. 159).

Epilogue – the General Strike of 1926

The cut in wages in coalmining – derived from the reduction of export trade prices started in 1924 and aggravated after the return to Gold in 1925 – together with the excessive coal supply compared to demand, brought about unrest between the mineworkers and the mine owners. The state intervened to mediate subsidies to the industry until May 1926, giving time for an inquiry to be developed by a Royal Commission, chaired by Herbert Samuel, while elaborating

anti-strike precautions, to avoid the arrival of a crisis. When the Commission's resolution came out, it did not please any of the sides in dispute: the miners, because it suggested reductions in wages, and the owners, as it encouraged national wage agreements and the industry's reorganisation. The transport, building, and printing trades, together with the iron and steel, as well as the metal and heavy chemical groups began the strike, and later on, other unions joined, amounting 2, 300, 000 workers on strike. The government responded with anti-strike action: emergency powers were invoked, and troops went onto the streets. The TUC General Council called to terminate the strike on May 13th, leaving only the miners fighting it out alone (Allen, 1960, pp. 190-200).

The miners, the main actors in the strike, who called for workers' unity as the last resource to succeed, were left behind and fought on alone for many months after the strike ended, while the members of the TUC General Council declared never to strike again (Croucher, 1987, p. 87). While the TUC withdrew unashamedly from the strike, the NUWM remained, reaffirming their compromise to never act as strike-breakers, for which they were recognised by the official Trade Union Movement (Watson, 2014, p. 66).

The 1926 General Strike showed an unexpected peak in industrial unrest in interwar Britain. It threatened the industrial relations' equilibrium during nine days in early May 1926, which Baldwin's government effectively tackled. It marked a watershed in the attitudes inside the developing relationship between employers, trade unions and the government. Nevertheless, the strike did not change the tendencies of trade and industrial organisation, nor the trend in wages; shifts in attitudes of the TUC General Council and in the Labour movement generally towards a defensive and pragmatic agenda were visible since the economic downturn of 1920-21. The strike's defeat undermined pugnacity, weakened solidarity, and strengthened the power of trade union leaderships vis-a-vis the rank-and-file (Jacques, 1976, pp. 376-377). It obliged the Labour movement to incorporate in the process of co-operation towards harmony

and industrial peace, strengthened throughout the 1920s as a strategy to avoid industrial unrest which might result in crisis, as it was due to happen in 1919. The strike also strengthened attitudes to isolate socialist and revolutionary groups, like the NUWM or the Minority Movement, who were seeking incorporation in the formal industrial relations system and pushing their agenda to transform their demands for better conditions for the employed and unemployed workers into state policies.

Conclusions

The formation of the NUWM was informed by organisations of the rank-and-file workers within the factories, of ex-servicemen formed in the aftermath of the Great War, and the CPGB, established in 1920. The NUWM was created as an amalgam of different organisations including the Shop Stewards' Movement, the Clyde Workers' Committee, the Sheffield Workers' Committee, the Coventry Unemployed Workers' Committee, the London District Council of Unemployed Organisations, and ex-servicemen organisations, like the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers and the National Union of Ex-servicemen.

The discontent created by dilution, especially in engineering factories, together with the lack of representation by the trade unions' representatives, resulted in the formation and strengthening of the Shop Stewards' Movement that, along with the organisations of ex-servicemen, especially the National Federation of Discharged and Demobilised Sailors and Soldiers and the National Union of Ex-servicemen, facilitated the formation of the NUWM in April 1921.

The NUWM sought to organise the unemployed workers to fight against capitalism – the cause of unemployment – find employment for the workless in the areas where they were based, pressure the local authorities to provide more and better relief for the unemployed,

required work or full maintenance at trade union rates for the workless and the recognition of the government of the Soviet Union and the development of a trading agreement with Russia to strengthen the national economy so the relief could be provided to the unemployed workers. The early years of the NUWM – an organisation that, while building at a national scale, remained until the late 1920s as a cluster of semi-independent local committees of unemployed workers – soon lost momentum due to the decrease of unemployment, the increase of conditions for the unemployed, and a crumbling of its leadership, meaning that by the mid-1920s it had only sporadic activities and a diminished influence.

Soon after its formation, the NUWM sought an alliance with the Trade Union Congress – the federation of trade unions in the UK – to build a scheme of protection for the unemployed workers and to influence the state to develop a policy that diminished the effects of unemployment. Since the beginning, the TUC General Council resisted affiliation of the NUWM. However, in 1923 the General Council accepted to collaborate with the unemployed workers' movement and agreed to form a Joint Advisory Committee on Unemployment in September that, however, produced only a limited advance of an agenda on behalf of the unemployed and treated the NUWM in a derisive fashion. The General Council's attitudes soon produced protests within the trade unions, which demonstrated the lack of representativeness of the genuine perception of the unemployed workers' movement within the trade unions.

The formation of the NUWM and its activities were closely tracked by agents of the Home Office's Directorate of Intelligence, who recorded weekly reports on revolutionary organisations in the UK. The early approach of the unemployed workers' movement to the state consisted of delegations who sought to influence the Boards of Guardians – the local administrations in charge of the Poor Law relief – to increase the scales of relief for the unemployed workers, as well as sporadic approaches to the national authorities, seeking hearings with the Prime Minister to demand a national policy to fight the effects of

unemployment. The state reacted contemptuously towards the mobilisations of the NUWM, with aggressive policing during demonstrations and with limited and temporary concessions regarding the extension of the unemployment relief system. Nevertheless, the day-to-day contact of the movement with the local government varied from conflictual to friendly depending on the attitudes of the Boards of Guardians. For most of the 1920s, the Boards of Guardians enjoyed a degree of flexibility to decide to provide unemployment relief and at what amount, which was often negotiated with the unemployed workers' representatives. The guardians usually provided more relief despite operating regulations suggesting otherwise.

The NMM, formed in 1924 to operate inside the trade unions seeking to influence the rank-and-file workers and incorporate them into militant communist mobilisations, worked throughout the 1920s as a close organisation alongside the NUWM. More dependant than the NUWM on the CPGB, the Minority Movement relied considerably on the work of the unemployed workers' movement, with which it shared not only ideals but characters and mobilisation strategies. The NMM – without its leaders' intention – proved to be an obstacle in the development of the NUWM during the early 1920s, partly because it required the services of prominent characters of the unemployed workers' movement and because it created frictions between the NUWM and the CPGB. One effect of such conflicts ended up in the brief existence of the Unemployed Workers' Organisation, a cleavage of the NUWM that challenged its authenticity and sought to occupy its place as an authentic movement representative of the workless.

The early history of the NUWM and its relation to the TUC analysed in this chapter shifted radically after the General Strike of 1926. The next chapter explains changes during the second half of the 1920s, together with the development of cooperation talks in industry, seeking to build a harmonious relationship between the trade unions and the employers, facilitated by the state. These efforts towards industrial cooperation proved the capacity of a

group of employers led by Alfred Mond to co-opt the trade unions and legitimise their role in the state's eyes. The second chapter also draws on the attitudes developed by the TUC to the NUWM while the General Council negotiated with the employers and sought to integrate further into the state apparatus, as well as on the responses of the state to the development of the NUWM between 1927 and 1931.

4.- Driving the dissident left into isolation: ostracising the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, 1927-1931

Introduction

This chapter explains the governing strategies used to isolate and withdraw the NUWM – together with the CPGB and the NMM – from the arena of legitimate and legal negotiation of industrial politics in Britain between 1927 and August 1931. Based on Keith Middlemas's notion of corporate bias, the chapter analyses how the state managed industrial discontent through its relationship with the TUC, seeking political harmony and the reduction of class conflict. Although the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act was aimed at diminishing the power of the labour movement, the intervention of the Mond Group – a new group of employers representative of new industries – to build a series of cooperation talks, helped to legitimise the trade unions in the view of the state. The state acceptance of the trade unions consolidated the TUC General Council's position as a governing institution, committed to cooperation with the state and the employers, and its commitment to remove the NUWM from the labour and trade union movement.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first draws on the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act. The second analyses the industrial talks between labour representatives and employers seeking to harmonise industrial relations and increase production. The third evaluates the TUC's strategies to push the unemployed workers' movement out of the labour and trade union movement. The fourth section explains, on the one hand, the implementation of the New Line of communist politics designed by Stalin, its application in Britain by the CPGB, which the Comintern and the RILU closely supervised, and the decline of the NMM. On the other hand, the chapter will examine the restructuring of the NUWM and the shift of communist attention towards the unemployed. The fifth section draws on the methods developed by the second Labour government during the late 1920s and early 1930s to

counteract the activities of a restructured and strengthened NUWM through the administration of unemployed relief.

As the NUWM became the primary embodiment of the surplus population of the capitalist system, seeking to unite the workers as a class, refusing cross-class alliances and challenging state policies, it came to be seen as a troublesome group that needed to be pushed out from the ranks of the Labour Movement. The state could not jeopardise the fragile and imprecise new order – of which it was its axial aspect – aimed at guaranteeing governability and political stability through the forging of an apparent consensual view of national interest and harmony in the social relations of production. Thereby, any group that could challenge the developing cooperative code between the government and the industrial organisations was to be withdrawn from the accord. The NUWM was part of a set of organisations – linked to the CPGB – unable to express a single and agreed voice. It was explicitly opposed to the debates on managerial planning between the state, the employers' organisations and the TUC, which became inconvenient to a government that privileged industrial conflict bargaining with closed, organised, and hierarchical bodies that could easily be subordinated to it.

The second half of the 1920s was framed by the effects of the restoration of the Gold Standard in April 1925 as part of the process to re-establish pre-war fiscal and monetary policy orthodoxy as well as London's financial leadership (Peden, 2000, p. 191; James, 1978, p. 201). The return to the Gold Standard marked an essential step in the removal of the economy from politicians' hands and had very adverse effects in Britain, especially due to falling of exports and increased unemployment, and it did not even succeed in fully restoring London's position as a financial centre (Peden, 2000, p. 203). The Treasury's orthodoxy, focused on balancing the budget, allocated around £60 million every year to repay the debt that, together with the use of reserves to support an overvalued pound, required vast sums of funds that otherwise could have gone to save the industry (James, 1978, p. 202). The second Baldwin government (1924-1929)

coexisted with a decline and hardship in the old industries, particularly in the north-west of England (with some prosperity in other areas) (James, 1978, p. 198). The persistent unemployment of over one million workers – 10% of the insured workforce – was explained as an effect of the international trading monetary system's dislocation, which would be restored with the return to Gold Standard. It was believed that the Gold Standard would bring currency stability and Free Trade and was opposed by only a small sector of the Conservative Party whilst supported by Liberals, Labour and most of the Conservatives as a source of international cooperation (James, 1978, p. 198; Peden, 2000, p. 193). Unemployment concentrated in the areas of the pre-war industrial giants. Coal and textiles, the largest industries in Britain, employing over 12 million workers, suffered from 60% unemployment and saw their exports falling to nearly half of their pre-war numbers – partly due to the increase of German coal exports, the British loss of the Baltic markets to Poland and the reduction of trade with Russia. Iron and steel, highly linked to shipbuilding, suffered as well after the war and the post-war boom that ended in 1921, utilising no more than 75% of its capacity throughout the 1920s (James, 1978, p. 200; Mowat, 1968, p. 279).

4.1.- The 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act

The 1926 General Strike was the perfect opportunity for the Conservatives, who had been looking for a strategy to diminish the Labour Party growing strength as a consequence of the extension of the electorate through the 1918 Representation of the People Act and from the financial contributions of the trade unions' political levy (Williamson, 2016, p. 40). Conservative figures like Churchill were anxious not only to "liberate workmen from the thraldom of the levy (Ibid, p. 42) but also about the development of trade unionism within the civil service (Ibid). Although the 1926 General Strike had developed within a legal framework, without intending to attack the government, the Conservative Party and employers' associations

pressured the government to deliver a bill to avoid another strike of the sort and to sanction the Labour movement. There was, especially in the staple industries, a tightening of employers' attitudes towards trade unions, a widespread retaliation against activists, and a strong call to the Government to amend the flexibilities permitted by previous legislation on trades disputes and trade unions (Gospel, 1987, p. 173).

The new legislation on trade disputes and trade unions developed by Baldwin's government sought to penalise the strikers and prevent further productivity disruption. For the trade unions' development during the following years, it is of particular relevance to examine the following aspects: trade unionism, trade union funds, picketing, the secret ballot to go on strike, civil service's unions and the presence of communists within public administration.

On May 19th 1926, the Cabinet agreed to set a Cabinet Committee to discuss legislation on trade unions and trade disputes (TNA CAB 27/327, *1st Report*, 19th May 1926) and received during the year a series deputations from different organisations to discuss the amendments to previous legislation on the matter. The Committee consulted a series of relevant organisations and figures on trade unionism, like William Weir – a Scottish industrialist and politician, an exponent of the Cooperation Theory – and Andrew Duncan – businessman and later a Director of the Bank of England (1929-1940), President of the Board of Trade, and Minister of Supply during the Second World War (TNA CAB 27/327, *Conclusions of a Meeting held in the Ministers' Conference Room, House of Commons*, 22nd June 1926, p. 2). Weir pointed out that the connection of Trade Unions with the Labour Party threatened British industry, causing trade depression, constant strikes, and obstruction to progressive employers, and, in contrast, considered that most workers opposed extreme measures and were loyal to their unions. Andrew Duncan held that modern trade unionism was impregnated with politics, that its position needed to be reviewed entirely, and urged to separate the friendly societies' role of the unions from their political functions and funds, to avoid propaganda supplied by the political

Labour Party to trade unionists (TNA CAB 27/327, *Conclusions of a Meeting held in the Ministers' Conference Room, House of Commons*, 22nd June 1926, p. 7). The National Union of Conservative & Unionist Associations pointed at the need for protection of individual members' rights, particularly regarding funds, and of measures securing the sound administration of trade unions (TNA CAB 21/296, *Enquiry directed by the Labour Advisory sub-Committee of the National Union of Conservative & Unionist Associations*, July 1926, p. 6). The Sub-committee on Trade Unions of the Conservative Private Members (1922) Committee recommended against giving the impression of attacking trade unions, antagonising their members, and lessening the authority of their leaders, and defended the principle of collective bargaining as essential to the satisfactory conduct of industry (TNA CAB 27/327, *Preliminary report of sub-committee on trade unions of the Conservative Private Members 1922 Committee*, 1926, p. 2). The NCEO considered that workers joined trade unions seeking self-protection to retain their job and to "live in peace with his fellows", not for political purposes (TNA CAB 27/327, *Confederation's Proposals*, 5th October 1926, p. 2, 8). A delegation of the National Union of Manufacturers (NUM) argued that trade unions' role should be to protect the interests of the workmen principally against the employer, to band them together, to demand their rights, and to transact other business with the employer, hence to carry on the work of a friendly society. They identified that workers had no real choice to join or leave the unions because in many cases trade conditions or influence in the factory compelled them to join, with no other options (TNA CAB 27/327, *Deputation to the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Labour from the NUM*, 12th October 1926, p. 5). All these voices shared a will to remove the political power the unions gave to the Labour Party; there was a general understanding that politics in trade unions altered their original function as protectors of the workers and, instead, were harming British trade. They refused the notion that a trade union could be involved in the political affairs of industrial relations.

The Cabinet's Legislation Committee sought to declare illegal any strike that was not directed solely at the maintenance or improvement of the industry's conditions in which the strike was engaged (TNA CAB 27/327, *1st Report*, 19th May 1926, p. 2). On this matter, the Conservative Sub-Committee on Trade Unions supported the right to strike, unless it affected vital services to the community, and aimed to reduce the number of strikes and lockouts by removing the cause rather than by suppressing the occasion of industrial unrest (TNA CAB 27/327, *Preliminary report of sub-committee on trade unions of the Conservative Private Members 1922 Committee*, 1926, n.d., p. 4). The Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation (EAENF) defended the agreement with the Engineering trade unions to avoid disputes that, since 1898, with very few exceptions, had been fully observed and had secured and stimulated co-operation and discipline within the ranks of organised bodies, the influence of individual opinion, as well as the active participation of individuals in the work of their organisations (TNA CAB 27/327, *Recommendations of the EAENF*, 30th September 1926, p. 1). The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Bill of 1927 declared illegal "any strike having any object besides the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in which the strikers are engaged" and if it was "designed or calculated to coerce the Government, or to intimidate the community or any substantial portion of the community" (DPS, *Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Bill*, 4th April 1927, pp. 1-2). It also made unlawful to commerce, continue, or apply any sums in furtherance or support of such strike. For a trade dispute to be considered as such, the Act established two features: a) it needed to be a dispute between employers and workmen, or between workmen and workmen in the same trade or industry; and b) to be connected with employment, non-employment, terms of employment or conditions of labour (DPS, *Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Bill*, 4th April 1927, pp. 1-2).

During the private meetings with the Legislation Committee, different voices considered the proposal about the conducting of a ballot – under rules set by the Chief Registrar

– for union members to decide to go on strike (TNA CAB 27/327, *Draft of the bill to declare and amend the law with respect to strikes and trade unions*, 7th June 1926). On the one hand, William Weir defended the secret ballot as a retardant of drastic action – a tool to weaken extremists and encourage responsible individual workers. On the other hand, he opposed a secret ballot conducted by the state because it would interfere individual workers' freedom, leave workers little time to consider their decision, increase the number of strikes, free executives and extremists leaders from responsibility, and, in broader terms, weaken the negotiating machinery (TNA CAB 27/327, *Conclusions of a Meeting held in the Ministers' Conference Room, House of Commons*, 22nd June 1926, p. 4). Andrew Duncan shared Weir's fear that the secret ballot would increase the number of strikes and saw it as an ineffective remedy of trade unionism's essential evils (*Ibid*, p. 7). Winston Churchill acknowledged that the majority of working men would adopt a sound and sensible attitude towards a secret ballot and that it would be a most effective method of restricting the influence of the young and extremist members of the union (*Ibid*, p. 6). The Labour Advisory Sub Committee of the National Union of Conservative and Unionist Associations favoured implementing a secret ballot (TNA CAB 21/296, *Enquiry directed by the Labour Advisory sub-Committee of the National Union of Conservative & Unionist Associations*, July 1926, p. 5). The Conservative Sub-committee on Trade Unions pointed out that, whilst some employers and conservative trade unionists favoured the compulsory secret ballot before any strike, ignoring the difficulties and complexities of the implementation of such scheme, some leading employers, familiar with the inner working of trade unions, doubted that its application would satisfy all parties affected and obtain the real views of all workers in the industry concerned (TNA CAB 27/327, *Preliminary report of sub-committee on trade unions of the Conservative Private Members 1922 Committee*, 1926, n.d., p. 5). They encouraged the extension of the conciliation machinery, a secret ballot conducted by the Registrar of Friendly Societies after a Court's

approval, in cases where the proposed strike threatened the general well-being of the community – lighting, water, fuel, or sanitary services – but not when its impact would not extend beyond very narrow limits (Ibid, pp. 5-7). In turn, the NCEO saw no value in implementing the secret ballot and pointed at potential dangers (TNA CAB 27/327, *Shorthand notes of a Conference between the Committee and a Deputation from the NCEO*, 26th July 1926). The deputation from the NUM supported the secret ballot as an excellent strategy to know the workers' will and considered the extension of the ballot to elect officials and to remove them should they attempt to be unjust to the individual members (TNA CAB 27/327, *Deputation to the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Labour from the NUM*, 12th October 1926, pp. 2-3). The NUM backed the secret ballot initiative to be supervised by the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies, or some other government authority, to guarantee that all workers shown on the books of the unions concerned could vote (TNA CAB 27/327, *Proposals of the National Union of Manufacturers*, 21st October 1926, p. 1). The Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Bill of 1927 did not enforce the secret ballot, even though it was a much-discussed subject throughout the talks within the Legislation Committee and was highlighted as a good mechanism to give the word to the moderate union members over extremists if supervised by the government through the Chief Registrar.

The discussions on the restrictions to picketing found an overall agreement among the deputations received by the Legislation Committee. All were in favour, at least, of its regulation, and some others went further to suggest its prohibition. The Conservative sub-committee on Trade Unions recommended a strict limitation of picketing to fight the evils connected with its practise (TNA CAB 27/327, *Preliminary report of sub-committee on trade unions of the Conservative Private Members 1922 Committee*, 1926, n.d., p. 2). The NUM and William Weir defended the outlawing of picketing to protect the rights of individuals to decide to work or not to work during industrial disputes, and because "there is no such thing as

peaceful picketing, it is simply organised tyranny" (TNA CAB 27/327, *Conclusions of a Meeting held in the Ministers' Conference Room, House of Commons*, 22nd June 1926, p. 4; *Deputation to the Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Labour from the NUM*, 12th October 1926, p. 15). The NCEO proposed to restrict it pickets to no more than two people without the chance to visit workers' homes to avoid intimidation (TNA CAB 27/327, *Shorthand notes of a Conference between the Committee and a deputation from the NCEO*, 19, 26th July 1926, pp. 4, 12-13). The EAENF backed the NCEO's points and added that pressure on the wives and families and traffic obstruction should be made unlawful and that only members of the union on strike, or who were directly concerned in the trade dispute, could act as pickets (TNA CAB 27/327, *Recommendations of the Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation*, 30th September 1926, p. 3).

The Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act of 1927 imposed strict restrictions concerning picketing. It declared it unlawful to attend or go near a house or place where a person resides or works to obtain or communicate information or persuade or induce any person to work or abstain from working in numbers. It was also deemed illegal for any workers to approach others to intimidate, obstruct or approach or lead a breach of the peace. The section three of the bill defined ‘to intimidate’ as to cause in the mind of a person a reasonable apprehension of injury to him or any person or property" (PDS, *Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Bill*, 4th April 1927, p. 3).

Regarding the political levy, the Conservative Sub-committee on Trade Unions suggested that benefit funds should be: a) registered separately and be placed in the names of trustees to keep them distinct from the general funds, b) used only for the purpose for which they are subscribed, c) not being interfered or transferred to general funds without very definite safeguards or be liable for payment of damages caused during disputes (TNA CAB 27/327, *Preliminary report of sub-committee on trade unions of the Conservative Private Members*

1922 Committee, 1926, n.d., p. 3). The EAENF suggested that unions' funds should be separated in provident funds – benefits of nature usually provided by Friendly Societies and not used for damages caused during disputes – political funds, and other funds, because if all the funds remained available for any purpose, they could be used to cover the consequences of tortious acts, unfairly using the money of workers who had contributed to the union's fund (TNA CAB 27/327, *Recommendations of the Engineering and Allied Employers' National Federation*, 30th September 1926, p. 2). The NUM recommended that union's funds should only be set up with the consent of a majority of the members obtained in a secret ballot, that no member should be compelled to contribute to a political fund unless and until they had consented in writing to make such contributions, and that the trade union benefit fund should be completely separated from other funds (TNA CAB 27/327, *Proposals of the National Union of Manufacturers*, 21st October 1926, p. 1).

The Trades Disputes and Trade Union Act of 1927 shifted the mechanism from contracting-out to contracting-in to the political funds, declaring it unlawful to require any union member to contribute to the political fund unless the member had delivered notice in writing of his/her willingness to participate and had not withdrawn the notice. The Act obliged unions to separate all contributions to the political fund from contributions to any other fund and forbade applications to the latter for any political objective (PDS, *Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Bill*, 4th April 1927, p. 4).

During the discussions on the legislation of trade unions and trades disputes, the Cabinet displayed worries about the entanglement of Civil Service associations with trade unions and proposed to forbid civil servants from joining associations other than those confined to the Civil Service (TNA CAB 27/327, *1st Report*, 19th May 1926, p. 8). The proposal was accepted and established in the Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act 1927. Because of this, the Civil Service Clerical Association and the Union of Post Office Workers had to end their

affiliation to the Trade Union Congress and Labour Party (Williamson, 2016, p. 66). During the 1920s in Britain, there were between 300,000 and 400,000 civil servants, many of them affiliated to the TUC and the Labour Party (Mills, 1928, p. 326). During the 1926 General Strike, some of the unions of civil servants affiliated to the TUC and voted for striking, but only 40 out of 220,000 participated in the strike (Williamson, 2016, p. 44). Besides, three of the seven unions affiliated to the TUC authorised the General Council to call them out and voted to support those on strike. This perhaps explains why the government decided to include this section in the Act (Mills, 1928, pp. 326-328; Shefftz, 1967, p. 398). Additionally, the Cabinet agreed to discharge from governmental departments without the right to a pension or any other superannuation benefit any person who showed reasonable evidence of being actively engaged in the dissemination of anti-constitutional or revolutionary propaganda (TNA CAB 23/55/5, *Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet*, 1st June 1927, pp. 1-3).

The Trades Disputes and Trades Union Act of 1927 threw out important principles hard-won over the previous century regarding trade union rights. Surprisingly, the Act was adopted without broad consultation; not even a Royal Commission was set up to consider its content and potential effects. It largely emerged from pre-existing pressures within the Conservative Party (Williamson, 2016, p. 72) and was a retaliation by the Conservative government to the labour movement's daring call out for the 1926 General Strike in support of the miners, although the TUC General Council terminated the strike a few days after it called it out. The very fact that the TUC terminated the strike so soon was a sign of weakness in the labour movement that the Government exploited, incited by a group of employers, especially the most aggrieved by the lockouts, united within the National Confederation of Employers' Organisation and in the Federation of British Industries. The greatest impact was to Labour political funds, which decreased by almost a third and its union-affiliated membership which fell from three million, 239,000 in 1927 to 2,025,000 in 1928 (Williamson, 2016, p. 65).

The drafting of the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act was intended to weaken the power of the Trade Union Movement, including the Labour Party, who had proven uncomfortable for the Conservative Party and the employers of the old British industries. The obstacles designed to diminish the transmission of financial aid from the trade unions to the Labour Party, the unlawfulness of the sympathetic strikes – hence general strikes – the ban on civil servants to join unions linked to the TUC, and the restrictions on picketing aimed at limiting the power of labour, which had at times shown signs of increasing radicalisation. Had the Act fully operated throughout the second half of the 1920s without any effort to temper the spirits, probably the Labour movement would have radicalised and joined efforts with Communist organisations to counteract the state and the employers' attacks. Nevertheless, a group of employers of the new industries led by Alfred Mond sought a different approach: to build a nationwide alliance with the Trade Union Congress towards prosperity and peace in industry and in doing so legitimise the trade unions in the view of the state. This changed the story in the second half of the 1920s.

4.2.- The cooperation talks: towards industrial prosperity

As part of the process of incorporation of the major interest groups as governing institutions described by Middlemas, the second half of the 1920s saw the efforts to build an industrial alliance between capital and labour to overcome the conflictual industrial relations that characterised the first post-war years in comparison with the pre-war years, and to facilitate their incorporation as estates of the realm. This section draws, on the one hand, on the Mond-Turner talks, the first stage in the cooperation talks led by Alfred Mond and, on the other hand, a second stage where the Federation of British Industries, the National Confederation of Employers' Organisations, and the Trade Union Congress sought to associate to discuss industrial legislation, unemployment and economic policy, outside of the Mond scheme.

Before the 1926 General Strike, there had been efforts to harmonise industrial relations: the Birmingham Alliances in the 1890s, the 1911-13 National Industrial Council, the Whitley Report, and the 1919 National Industrial Conference (McDonald & Gospel, 1973, p. 809). The difference in the aftermath of the General Strike was that the efforts materialised in concrete talks, although these did not lead to formal cooperation. Paradoxically, these discussions occurred simultaneously as the writing and approval of the 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act, a piece of legislative machinery to ban and demobilise trade unions and the Labour Movement.

The main bodies involved in industrial relations by 1926 were the FBI, the NCEO, the Mond Group and the TUC. On the employers' side, the FBI (1916) and the NCEO (1919) – closely related to the Conservative party – gathered the basic and traditional industries: old small and medium businesses comprised of a cross-section of industrial capital, with low profitability and based on labour-intensive production processes. These businesses saw the reduction of wages as the only solution to overcome their income disadvantage, often putting them in a confrontational position with the trade unions. Paradoxically, however, they were dependent on low-conflict relationships of production to meet their aims and thus devoted more resources to the bargaining processes; any strike or dispute in the plant had serious damages on productivity (Jacques, 1976, pp. 389-393). The NCEO gathered employers' organisations and was mainly focused on labour matters, putting it into frequent contact with the trade unions. It claimed to represent 50% of the United Kingdom's working population, 90% of the organised employers in the country, and 57% of gross national output. The FBI was mainly composed of big individual firms and commercial associations (McDonald & Gospel, 1973, p. 822; Gospel, 1979, p. 188). The Mond Group, on the other hand, gathered large-scale international industries. They were more profitable and more capital-intensive science-based industries, also comprising the newer electrical engineering, cars and gas companies, oriented to the domestic

markets (Perry, 2000, p. 54). It also included 13 firms of the old export-oriented trades like coal, textiles, iron and steel. It was directed by Alfred Mond, director of the Westminster Bank, chair of the Anglo-American Finance Co., who had been a member in the Liberal Cabinet during Lloyd George's coalition, which administered his families' chemical, nickel, steel and coal firms. The employers assembled in the Mond Group were mainly top businessmen, interested in rationalisation, who had little contact with industrial relations at shop-floor level, and whose firms were a product of recent amalgamations (Ibid). The Mond Group was connected with some of the largest British companies, like the Imperial Chemical Industries, the General Electric Company, Dunlop, the railway companies, Dorman Long, Courtaulds, John Brown, Bolckow Vaughan, Richard Thomas, Hadfields, Austin Motors, Bowater Paper, Distillers' Company, and the major banks (Jacques, 1976, pp. 389-393; Gospel, 1979, p. 182). This group felt more conformable dialoguing with the TUC than the NCEO and FBI, as they were less dependent on labour production processes. On labour's side, by 1926, the TUC had consolidated its position as the central coordinating body of the trade union movement, with a degree of legitimacy within the unions, but it had yet to be recognised as such by the government and the employers.

4.2.1.- The Mond-Turner Talks

The aftermath of the 1926 General Strike seemed an excellent opportunity for Alfred Mond's project to reorganise British industry, to make it more competitive, through rationalisation and amalgamation, and move it away from political conflict through a scheme of cooperation between capital and labour. Following the fusion of the Imperial Chemical Industries in December 1926, Mond sought to expand the amalgamation tendency to the whole of British industry, particularly the coal industry, to match with the worldwide industrial fusion to compete better in the world market, implementing rationalisation – the application of scientific

organisation to industry – merging production and distribution to shorten the distance between supply and demand (Bayliss, 1969, p. 601).

Next to Alfred Mond, three key figures inspired the development of the co-operation talks between employers and the trade unions: Arthur Steel-Maitland, Baldwin's Minister of Labour, Lord William Weir, NCEO member, and Walter Milne-Bailey, from the TUC Research Department. The three of them were confident that the new industrial accord would replace Parliament as the arena where industrial matters would be discussed, thus moving such questions out of politics. While Weir emphasised parliament's inadequacies and distortions in policy continuity, Milne-Bailey highlighted the excessive parliamentary time consumed discussing such matters. Steel-Maitland showed enthusiasm about placing industrial prosperity in the hands of a group of moderate employers and trade unionists who would expel extremists and guarantee a common ground between MacDonald's section of the Labour Party and the mainstream of Baldwin's section within the Conservatives (Middlemas, 1979, p. 194, 330).

In November 1927, Alfred Mond wrote to the president of the FBI, Lord Jack Pease, confident that the General Council would agree to initiate talks to discuss amalgamation, rationalisation, employment security, individual workers' status, disputes' prevention, and the participation of all concerned in the prosperity of industry (MRC MSS.200/F/3/D1/9/4, *Letter from Alfred Mond to Lord Gainford*, 16th November 1927). At the same time, Mond invited the Secretary of the TUC General Council to discuss the same issues, on the understanding that their common interests were greater than their divergences (MRC MSS.200/F/3/D1/9/4, *Letter from the Mond Group to the Secretary of the TUC's General Council*, 23rd November 1927).

In December 1927, the TUC General Council accepted the invitation of Mond and the following month the First Full Joint Conference was celebrated in the Apartments of the Royal Society, Burlington House (MRC MSS.237/3/11/6, *Interim Report submitted to the Full Joint Conference*, 4th July 1928, p. 4). The employers' side formed a sub-Committee composed of

Mond, Vane-Tempest-Stewart, Milne-Watson, Hirsh, Stanley (Lord Ashfield), Weir, and Willey (McDonald & Gospel, 1973, p. 819). The TUC General Council chose Turner, Bevin, Citrine, Thomas, Pugh, Richards, Thorne M. P., and Milne-Bailey, to represent the TUC in the talks (MRC MSS.237/3/11/6, *Interim Report submitted to the Full Joint Conference*, 4th July 1928, p. 4). The conference committed to the restoration of industrial prosperity and the progressive improvement in the population's standard of living (Ibid, p. 7). It decided to work on eight main themes: Organization of Industrial Relations; Unemployment; Distribution of the Proceeds of Commodities and Services; Organisation, Technique and Control of Industry; Finance; Constitutional; International. The committees agreed on trade union recognition[3], victimisation[4], and rationalisation (Ibid, p. 24). The committees concurred to send a memorandum to the Chancellor about the Gold Reserve and its relation to industry. Additionally, it adopted a new conciliation machinery, to be integrated to a National Industrial Council (NIC), consisting of an equal number of members from the TUC General Council and the recognised employers' organisations (MRC MSS.237/3/11/6, *Interim Report submitted to the Full Joint Conference*, 4th July 1928, p. 11). Their main functions were to hold regular meetings for general consultation on the most extensive questions on industry and industrial progress; to establish a Standing Joint Committee for the appointment of Joint Conciliation Boards and to establish a direct machinery for a continuous investigation into industrial problems (MRC MSS.237/3/11/6, *Interim Report submitted to the Full Joint Conference*, 4th July 1928, p. 18).

[3] Trade Union Recognition had two main aspects: a) the recognition of the TUC as the most effective organisation and the only body which possesses the authority, which can be exercised by its General Council, to discuss and negotiate on all questions relating to the entire field of industrial reorganisation and the industrial relations; and b) The most effective co-operation with individual industries can best be obtained by deliberation and negotiation with the accredited representatives of unions recognised by the TUC.

[4] It is most undesirable that any workman should be dismissed or otherwise penalised on account of his membership of a Union, on account of his official position in a Union or on account of any legitimate Trade Union activities. Where workmen were penalised for any part played in trade dispute of 1926, whether justified or not, such action is to be deprecated.

When the FBI met to discuss their participation in the proposed cooperation scheme, its members raised concerns about the large amount of non-union labour and non-federated employers. There was the potential risk that some members of these would resist placing their labour affairs in the hands of the National Industrial Council because it was NCEO's territory and on the danger of taking decisions before previous consultation with their membership because, as David Milne-Watson recognised, the rank-and-file might hold different views than their representatives (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/3, *Minutes of the Grand Council of the Federation of British Industries*, 11th July 1928, p. 2, 4). The Grand Council of the FBI appointed a committee, representative of all the industrial groups of the federation, to investigate the proposals and the questions involved, authorised to consult with the NCEO and the Mond Group (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/3, *Proposed National Industrial Council*, 11th July 1928). The FBI consulted its 160 registered associations, asking them to consider whether: a) to accept the invitation; b) to offer to appoint representatives to meet TUC representatives to discuss whether periodic consultation on economic and commercial questions was possible and desirable, and which was the best form for such discussion to take; or c) to reject the invitation (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/3, *Proposed National Industrial Council*, 14th December 1928, p. 1).

Many employers' associations seemed in favour of both the talks and the National Industrial Council. Nevertheless, there were a few opposing or, at least, showing some level of criticism. For example, the United Glass Bottle Manufacturers refused to participate because they were unsympathetic towards trade unionism after the leadership's involvement in the General Strike and because of fears that trade unions would take advantage of the National Industrial Council to regain the lost ground (MRC MSS.200/F/3/D1/9/4, *Letter to R. T. Nugent, director of the FBI,* 16th July 1928, p. 1). The Lee, Howl & Co., the Zenith Electric Co., the Nathaniel Lloyd & Co., the Robert William & Sons, the Delta Metal Company, the Wholesale

Clothing Manufacturers' Federation of Great Britain (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/4, November 1928), and the Wool and Allied Textile Employers' Council (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/3, *Letter from the Wool and Allied Textile Employers' Council to H. B. Strang*, 11th December 1928, p. 1), opposed the FBI's involvement in the Mond-Turner Conference because its goal was to increase and stimulate trade, whilst the NCEO's was to deal with labour questions, and because the National Industrial Council could give no sufficient consideration to the needs and requirements of a large number of smaller industries (Ibid).

Another group of critical employers' associations favoured the talks, but not the establishment of the National Industrial Council. For example, the Kidson's, Taylor & Co. considered that neither the FBI nor NCEO were sufficiently comprehensive in scope to represent all the employers' interests involved (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/5, *Bobbin Manufacturers' Association*, 19th November 1928, pp. 1-2). The British Engineers' Association saw the TUC fit to deal with labour questions (wages, hours, conditions of working), but not necessarily competent to deal with the full range of industrial, economic, commercial and financial matters specified in the Interim Report (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/3, *Letter from the British Engineers' Association to R. T. Nugent*, 16th January 1929, p. 2). Some other employers' associations – the Mining Association of Great Britain (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/5, *Interim Report of the Melchett-Turner Conference*, 7th December 1928, p. 1), the National Association of Coke and Bye-Product Plan Owners and the Iron and Steel Wire Manufacturers' Associations (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/3, December 1928) expressed their opposition without any explanation.

In February 1929, Nugent, president of the FBI, communicated Alfred Mond that his organisation, after consultation with its associated bodies, had decided to refuse the proposal to join the National Industrial Council, because it was difficult for the FBI to embrace all

questions affecting British industry, considering the division of tasks of the FBI and the NCEO (MRC MSS.200/F/3/18/3, *Letter from R. G. Nugent to Mond*, 13th February 1929, pp. 1-2).

While the Mond-Turner talks did not manage to gain enough acceptance amongst the employers – especially in the NCEO – and could not consolidate what the Interim Joint Report proposed, it did have a good impact on public opinion and represented a step forward in terms of high-level industrial discussions. To a certain degree, the talks achieved overall three important advances. Firstly, trade union recognition – the TUC was widely recognised as the workers' representative with whom to negotiate industrial relations and high industrial policy; secondly, a pledge against victimisation – it declared undesirable to dismiss or penalise workers because of their trade union membership and activities; and thirdly, a resolution against Churchill's project to amalgamate the Bank of England and the Treasury (McDonald & Gospel, 1973, p. 820). The first stage of negotiations matched with an apparent harmony achieved between parliamentary and industrial/economic activity, and between the government's industrial departments and employers and labour leadership. While the government did its part to achieve this degree of cooperation, the labour and employers' organisations were generally willing to build alliances with the state as the axis (Middlemas, 1979, pp. 176-181).

This first stage of cooperation talks failed partly because the NCEO and the TUC lacked coercive power over their members to impose central direction. They both represented a moderate industrial spirit, and they both understood that the government would agree to negotiate with them – because of their capacity to express one agreed voice – rather than with other organisations claiming to represent either business or labour (Ibid, p. 184). Despite all the conflicts and incompatibilities between the NCEO and the TUC, shared features – joined with the affinity between the FBI and the TUC – permitted the continuation of the talks under a different framework.

4.2.2.- The tripartite negotiation: an alternative to the Mond-Turner Talks

Once the openly corporatist theme was removed from the accord, the NCEO, FBI and TUC sought to create their form of institutional cooperation (Middlemas, 1979, p. 193). As an alternative to the Mond-Turner scheme, the three bodies met in the Joint Conference on Industrial Reorganisation and Industrial Relations to discuss economic policy matters, issues of common interest to the British industry, and to explain the difficulties which stood in the way of consultation with the TUC through a National Industrial Council, as proposed in the Mond-Turner Report (MRC MSS.200/F/3/S1/18/3, *Letter from FBI & NCEIO to Citrine*, 13th February 1929, p. 1; MRC MSS.200/F/3/D1/9/1, *Letter to W. Citrine*, 13th February 1929, p.1).

In March 1929, the conference discussed the unemployment problem. Alfred Mond stood against treating unemployment as a political controversy, *vis-a-vis* Ben Tillett's view that the question of unemployment had been a vital factor in the struggles of the trade union movement and that it was a political issue, and Arthur Cook, who claimed that unemployment had economic causes and that he had never heard in Mond's speeches the idea that economic questions were non-political because it was not possible to separate the economic from the political (MRC MSS.292/262/20, *Report of the Full Joint Conference on Industrial Reorganisation and Industrial Relations*, 12th March 1929, p. 5).

The first tripartite meeting took place on 23rd April 1929; it was the first time the three bodies met together (MRC MSS.200/B/3/2/C172, *Conference between representatives of the FBI, the NCEO and the TUC*, 23rd April 1929, p. 5). Alfred Mond insisted on the National Industrial Council as the proper and useful machinery that would not interfere with the individual industries and their relationships with joint industrial councils and other machinery types. Still, the NCEO and FBI refused because such a decision was beyond their powers and because it would be inefficient (Ibid). They proposed meetings on specific topics, some between the three present bodies, and others just between the TUC and either the FBI or NCEO

depending on the matter. Walter Citrine, the General Secretary of the TUC, criticised the employers' inflexible position to build new machinery in the face of the failure of the existing one, which resulted in an excessive reliance on the government to set up commissions, conciliation boards, and courts of arbitration, to solve conflicts, instead of industry attempting to settle its own affairs within its ranks (MRC MSS.200/B/3/2/C172, *Conference between representatives of the FBI, the NCEO and the TUC*, 23rd April 1929, p. 15). Citrine opposed the meetings' alternative to discuss only specific issues because the conversations needed to be general in principle, in outlook and application, not of a particular character (*Ibid*, p. 14). Cook called attention to working conditions as the origin of industrial conflict and backed Citrine's criticisms of the employers' representatives for rejecting proposals for new machinery, the excessive reliance on the government and the lack of consideration to unemployment (Ibid, p. 18).

The NCEO, FBI and TUC met again in July 1929. The NCEO and the FBI insisted on dealing separately with each employers' body, depending on whether the matter was labour or commercial, and proposed the formation of a small committee to determine if TUC proposals concerned the realm of the FBI, the NCEO or both, that would however not consider questions on individual members' affairs (MRC MSS.200/B/3/2/C172, *Meeting of the Joint Committee between the TUC General Council, the NCEO and the FBI*, 24th July 1929, p. 3). Bon Tillett, M. P. and member of the TUC, protested against the limitations imposed on them, such as not commenting on finance, banking, credit, prices or currency in industry (Ibid, p. 8).

In November 1929, the FBI, the NCEO and the TUC agreed to form a smaller sub-committee to explore matters further and to submit a report on the question of establishing a procedure for consultation and cooperation (MRC MSS.00/B/3/2/C66 *Meeting of the Joint Sub-Committee between the NCEO, the FBI, and the TUC*, 19th November 1929, pp. 2-3). The subcommittee proposed that the TUC, NCEO or FBI propose to discuss subjects of common

interest to British industry. The Allocation Committee would decide if the topic concerned the responsibility of the NCEO or the FBI or both. The competent organisations would then discuss the question unless they considered that the proposed subject was inappropriate for discussion. All discussions at meetings and correspondence arising out of the procedure proposed, would be confidential to the TUC, the NCEO and the FBI (Ibid, pp. 3-4). In the next meeting of the Joint Conference, all agreed to adopt the scheme proposed by the subcommittee (MRC MSS.200/B/3/2/C66, *Joint Conference of Representatives of the NCEO, FBI and TUC*, 19th December 1929).

In September 1930, the Joint Conference issued its final report, where it recognised the inability to adopt a National Industrial Council and machinery to prevent disputes. It celebrated, however, the alternative scheme reached in December 1929 (MRC MSS.292/262/21, *Final report Melchett-TUC Conference*, 30th September 1930). The report recognised the realisation of one of the first objectives of the joint talks' original proposal: meeting to consider questions relating to industrial reorganisation and industrial relations. It announced the ending of the Conference on Industrial Reorganisation and Industrial Relations even though the planned agenda had not been wholly covered (MRC MSS.292/262/21, *Final report Melchett-TUC Conference*, 30th September 1930).

This second stage of high-level industrial negotiations between the representatives of the two leading employers' federations and the Trade Union Congress did not achieve the joint policy devised in 1929. Even though this second stage of negotiations, much like the Mond-Turner talks, failed to achieve the goals intended, it should be highlighted that it did achieve an not inconsiderable goal: the bringing together the leadership of capital and labour, and the broadening of the outlook and sense of perspective of industrial relations (McDonald & Gospel, 1973, p. 828). One the other hand, in a more concrete form, it also achieved a joint voice in 1930 at the MacMillan Committee in May 1930 – a committee on finance and industry that

recognised the instability in the price level behind the defect of the economic system – and the Imperial Conference, and on the British Empire Economic Conference in Ottawa in 1932 that gave birth to the British Commonwealth of Nations and the policy of free trade. The lack of success in this second effort to produce joint policy between the NCEO, FBI and TUC was partially because the NCEO stated an open divergence that, pressured by its associated organisations, transformed into a belligerent position pursuant of wage cuts as the best strategy to combat the world economic depression (Middlemas, 1979, p. 211).

The cooperation talks between employers' organisations and the TUC, despite the lack of concrete furtherance of joint policies, tempered the industrial spirits during the second half of the 1920s and avoided the radicalisation of the Labour Movement in favour of a cooperative attitude between the TUC and employers' organisations. Alfred Mond's attempt to intervene in industrial conflict to offer an innovative approach to the relationship between the representatives of capital and labour saved the equation of corporate bias and strengthened the tripartite relationship between the state, capital and labour. Alfred Mond's project helped to legitimise the trade unions in the view of the state and, at the same time, legitimised the state's attitudes towards the NUWM and the NMM in the light of public opinion. In accepting the trade unions' participation in high-level negotiations with government and the influential employers' associations, the state proved that it was not against hearing labour's voice and delivering progressive labour policies, as long as labour proved capable of organising in a hierarchical body – the TUC – delivering a single and agreed voice, and conducting itself within parliamentary limits. The state not only benefited from its relationship with the TUC to govern in a less conflictual industrial atmosphere, but it also used the trade unions' federation to marginalise the NUWM, so the state did not take all the burden of responsibility.

4.3.- The TUC's strategies to dispel the NUWM during the late 1920s

One of the imperatives for the TUC to become a governing institution was to withdraw its few remaining links with communist organisations, forcing the communists to operate outside the parliamentary arena and thus guard the parliamentary arena as the sole preserve of legitimate political activity. Alongside the development of the 1927 Act and the cooperation talks, the TUC General Council began to develop strategies to alienate the NUWM from the labour and trade union movement. The TUC first broke down the Joint Advisory Committee on Unemployment and then commanded its associated trade unions to break any link to the unemployed workers' movement.

In March 1927, the TUC General Council unilaterally terminated the short-lived Joint Advisory Committee on Unemployment. Walter Citrine, the TUC General Secretary, explained to Holt, the NUWM's secretary, that, because of the existence of a special Joint Committee on Unemployment between the TUC and the Labour Party, it was useless to continue the scheme between the TUC and the NUWM (MRC MSS.292/135.61, *Letter from Citrine to Holt*, 10th March 1927). Holt expressed his regrets in the joint committee's abandonment, especially at a time "when the Government is contemplating severe attacks upon the unemployed section of the working class" (MRC MSS.292/135.61, *Letter from J. W. Holt to W. M. Citrine*, 21st March 1927). The abolition of the Joint Advisory Committee was the first expression of the TUC's new strategy to guarantee its role in the newly achieved tripartite industrial relationship with the employers and the state. As an intermediary of the central government, the TUC needed to step away from any organisation within the labour movement that could jeopardise their newly achieved role.

The breaking off with the NUWM needed constant reinforcement, presented in the form of the threat the NUWM posed to the labour movement. For that purpose, in early 1928, the TUC circulated a memorandum to communicate to the secretaries of all trades councils and

federations of trades councils that the General Council did not recognise the NUWM and warning them about NUWM's claims suggesting otherwise (MRC MSS.292/135.61, *TUCGC Circular No. 27*, 1st March 1928). Later that year, the General Council again addressed a letter to the secretaries of its affiliated unions acknowledging the reception of reports alleging the NUWM's conduct of cases for unemployed workers to the Court of Referees, obtaining subscriptions and future recruitment for the movement. The letter encouraged the unions to ensure that they –not the NUWM – brought all cases to the Court of Referees or the Umpire and to avoid any involvement with the unemployed workers' movement, an organisation that "cannot in any case deal with these matters effectively" (MRC MSS.292/135.61, *TUCGC CIR. NO. 63/1927-28*, 9th August 1928).

During the spring and summer of 1928, some trade unions and associations complained about the interference from communist entities in their internal affairs. The Shop Assistants condemned the NMM's attempts to influence the elections for official positions and determined that no member or supporter of the CPGB or the NMM should be permitted to hold office in their union (MRC MSS.292/773/9/2, *Recent Trade Union decisions re Communist and Minority Movements*, 1928). The Amalgamated Engineering Union also protested against the NMM and CPGB's disruptive activities intended to interfere with the union's affairs, after it was evidenced that the Minority Movement' had attempted to influence the election of union officers (MRC MSS.292/773/9/2, *Recent Trade Union decisions re Communist and Minority Movements*, 1928, p. 1). Similar complaints came from the Executive Committee of the May, Boot and Shoe Ops, the General Council of the May, General and Municipal Workers, the Miners' Federation, and the Bakers and Confectioners, which urged the labour and trade union movements to take stronger attitudes against Communists and the NMM who were deemed to be "doing more harm to the labour movement than ever the Tories and Liberals had done" (Ibid, p. 4).

The TUC exemplified the NUWM's threats and its links to the CPGB and NMM with a speech from Wal Hannington to the 6th Congress of the Communist International – where he had called on the Comintern to consider the unemployed army's importance for the revolution and denounced the TUC's efforts, in collusion with the Mond Group, to control and pacify the unemployed (MRC MSS.292/773/9/2, *Trades Union Congress General Council, The Sixth Congress of the Communist International*, 31st August 1928).

Despite the TUC's efforts to push the NUWM out of the trade union movement, its strategy failed to achieve consensus among its registered organisations. While some trade unions and trade councils backed the attack against the unemployed workers' movement, some others showed opposition. The first group were organisations like the National Federation of Insurance Workers, the Firemen's Trade Union, the Iron & Steel Trades Confederation, the National Amalgamated Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen & Clerks (MRC MSS.292/135.61, 1928). Of the second group, some organisations that regretted the attitudes taken by the General Council to the NUWM were the Peterborough and District Trades and Labour Council, Normanton Trades Council, the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades' Association, and the Deptford and Greenwich Trades Council, which saw in the TUC's repudiation of the NUWM an act of treachery (MRC MSS.292/135.61, *Letter from Deptford and Greenwich Trades Council to Citrine*, 16th March 1928).

To strengthen the – so far unsuccessful – strategies to uproot the links of the labour movement with the NUWM, the TUC General Council developed a scheme of unemployed associations that could replace the unemployed workers' movement in representing the workless to the Umpire and in providing them activities to make their life more bearable. In September 1928, during its 60th Annual Congress in Swansea, the TUC General Council announced that, after the success of the first experiment of unemployed associations organised by the Bristol Trades Council, it would extend the scheme to Manchester, Liverpool, Walsall,

Hull, Bradford, Sheffield, and Leeds. Should those cases be successful, the General Council would consider extending the scheme even more, under careful supervision and direction (WCML, *Report of the Proceedings at the 60th Annual Trades Union Congress, Swansea*, 3rd and 8th September 1928, p. 111). Any unemployed worker could be a member of an unemployed association by the payment of 1d a week and, when employment was secured, the member would be transferred to the appropriate trade union. The new unemployed associations would organise the unemployed in a locality, impress the government and local authorities the need to find work for the unemployed, and obtain for them as high a standard of living as possible. The new organisations – to be adopted only in approved areas – would be financed by the members' contributions (1d a week) and grants from different organisations and individual sympathisers, though without any TUC input (Ibid). The TUC highlighted that the scheme for unemployed associations did not intend the unions to encourage any subsidiary organisations, likely to interfere with their prerogatives, but rather the protection of trade unions' interest was the priority (MRC MSS.292/135.61, *Circular No. 24*, 6th December 1928)

During the first years of the experimental scheme, the TUC General Council received some complaints on the establishment of unemployed associations from its associated trade unions. For example, the North Wales Quarrymen's Union and the Amalgamated Society of Operative Lace Makers considered that there was no need for unemployed associations because it was the duty of each union to take care of their unemployed members (MRC MSS.292/135.6, *Letter from North Wales Quarrymen's Union to Citrine*, 11th December 1928; *Letter from the Amalgamated Society of Operative Lace Makers to Citrine*, 16th January 1929). The Amalgamated Society of Dyers, Bleachers, Finishers & Kindred Trades feared the unemployed associations could bring non-unionists into the trade unions and create antagonism (MRC MSS.292/135.6, *Letter from the Amalgamated Society of Dyers, Bleachers, Finishers & Kindred Trades*, 28th January 1929). And the National Society of Woolcombers saw in the

setting of such associations a potential duplication of work and confusion (MRC MSS.292/135.6, *Letter from the National Society of Woolcombers to Citrine*, 14th January 1929).

During the summer of 1929, the TUC General Council issued a Memorandum for the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Disruption. In it, the General Council announced the investigation results on the activities of the Communist International, the Red International of Labour Unions, the CPGB, and the National Minority Movement. It concluded that these organisations deliberately exercised a disruptive influence inside the trade union movement through a divide-and-conquer strategy, seeking to overthrow its leadership and replace it with communists under the control of the Comintern and the RILU (MRC MSS.292/773/9/2, *Memorandum for the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Disruption*, 6th July 1929, pp. 5, 18-19). The memorandum reported that some members in the Labour Research Department's Executive Committee were either CPGB members or sympathisers, making the Research Department a subsidiary of the Communist Movement (MRC MSS.292/773/9/2, *Memorandum for the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Disruption*, 6th July 1929, pp. 5, 7, 18-19). However, of more immediate concern were the activities of the NUWM. The main concern about the unemployed workers' movement was that it pretended to be an independent movement with no connection with Communism (Ibid, p. 8). The disruptive activities by the Communist and NMM in the unions included: attacks on officials and policy; the disclosure of confidential information to the press; the intervention in disputes, negotiations, and elections; the formation of breakaways; and the promotion of unauthorised and impracticable policies in unions and trade councils (Ibid, p. 22).

The memorandum included reports of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and the Shop Assistants' Union who experienced difficulties in internal negotiations due to the activity of the NMM. The National Union of General & Municipal Workers, the National Union of

Railwayman, the Railway Clerks Association and the Yorkshire division of the Miners' Federation reported considerable disruption, such as the closure of some branches and some members' disenfranchisement – but no damages on its Executive. The North Wales Quarrymen denied disruptive elements, however there was some influence of communist literature on some of its members. The Locomotive Engineers & Firemen Association Society confirmed that communists elected as delegates of the society acted on the instructions of the CPGB that, despite not affecting the society's organisation, tended to cripple its work and challenge its policy. The Amalgamated Engineering Union denounced the issuance by the NMM of leaflets urging members to vote against the employers' offer in a ballot and containing documents with instructions for voting and statements contrary to the rules of the Union. Some other unions – the Wood Cutting Machinists, the Waterproof Garment Workers' Trade Union, the Shop Assistants, Warehousemen and Clerks, and the National Amalgamated Union – reported attempts of disruption by communist organisations that, in one way or another, had affected their organisations (MRC MSS.292/773/9/2, *Memorandum for the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Disruption*, 6th July 1929).

The abandonment of the Joint Advisory Committee on Unemployment and the setting-up of unemployed associations showed the General Council's interest in dividing the working class – especially the unemployed workers – and avoiding the strengthening of the NUWM which could jeopardise the TUC's position as a governing institution. It would be naïve to think that the strategy came solely from the General Council of the TUC. The Congress was involved in a relationship with the state as a subordinate body, an intermediary of the central government, which allowed it to grow and acquire new representative powers on behalf of their members, becoming a governing institution following a line imposed from the state (Middlemas, 1979, p. 371). The strategy failed to entirely displace the NUWM from the domain of the labour movement. This was partially because many trade unions and trade councils

gladly collaborated with the unemployed workers' movement, and also because the NUWM was filling a gap left by the official labour movement which had failed to meet the necessities of the working class because it was committed to an uneven relationship with the state that disallowed its entities from acting independently.

4.4.- Fight from outside: the CPGB and NUWM's reshape of strategy, 1929-1931

The years between 1929 and 1931 marked a watershed not only for the interwar years in Britain as a whole but also in the history of the NUWM and the attitudes to it from the state, the trade union movement and the CPGB. A nested series of events reshuffled British industrial struggles. On the one hand, the CPGB's Class-against-class policy, mandated by the Comintern, and the weakening of communist influence inside the trade union movement – with the consequent decline of the NMM – combined with the TUC General Council's strategy to purge the trade union movement of communist organisations, forced the CPGB to reshape its plan to build a socialist society in Britain. On the other hand, the NUWM's reorganisation during its 6th National Conference in September 1929 into a more centralised movement strengthened its position on the verge of the peak of unemployment in the early 1930s and forced the state to modify substantially its strategy to marginalise the movement.

4.4.1.- Class-against-Class and the decline of the National Minority Movement

The seventh plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1926 marked for Nikolai Bukharin – its General Secretary – the beginning of the third period for the communist movement – following the first period marked by the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the second characterised by a period of relative capitalist stabilisation from 1923, where the building of united fronts with national trade union movements seemed an excellent opportunity for the spread of the communist ideology (Worley, 2002, p. 58). The shift to the

third period was highly influenced by the difficulties to influence the anti-communist Chinese leader of the Kuomintang, Chiang Kai-Shek, which occurred alongside the re-orientation of the Soviet Union towards a centrally planned economy, and was expected to radicalise the working class (Worley, 2002, p. 59; Martin, 1969, p. 102). The Comintern faced difficulties with the building of united fronts because the national social democratic parties were substantially more robust than the communists and thus obstructed the dominance of the communist line. The class-against-class policy was implemented in 1927-8 as a shift of Comintern policy after Stalin defeated Bukharin in dictating the Soviet line and once it was clear that the united front strategy had failed in Britain and China. In China, the Kuomintang's radical opposition to the Moscow line (for a time tolerated) had ended violently with the destruction of the Commune of Canton and massacres of Chinese communist sympathisers (Martin, 1969, pp. 104-108).

In Britain, the CPGB was continually doubtful about the implementation of the new line because of the left-wing's weak position within the labour and trade union movement – probably overestimated by Moscow – and because an aggressive establishment of the new attitude could risk the Anglo-Russian Joint Advisory Council (Worley, 2002, p. 60). There was a conflict between the international discipline sought by Stalin and the need for local flexibility to implement it, as well as a domestic dislocation in the CPGB between a younger generation more sympathetic to the new line than the old guard (Martin, 1969, p. 102, 114). The RILU and the Comintern seemed at first tolerant of the CPGB's lack of enforcement of the new line, while their prime concern was the developments in Germany, France and the US. Nevertheless, as the Stalin line was imposed, Moscow tightened its approach to Britain, and then the CPGB was pressured to begin to develop the sectarian class-against-class policy, turning against the labour and trade union movement, against industrial peace and towards the takeover of industrial campaigns seeking to form the "one union" for each industry (Martin, 1969, p. 111;

Worley, 2002, p. 11). The CPGB's task would be to expose the Social Fascist character of the Labour Party, expose the reformist labour and trade union movement's treachery and assume independent leadership of the workers. The NMM would set up temporary committees to be later transformed into permanent factory committees, as shop-floor rivals of the existing trade union machinery, and be later amalgamated into a new national organisation of the revolutionary trade union movement (Martin, 1969, p. 105).

During the class-against-class policy, the CPGB and the NMM – continually in tension because the latter embraced non-communist elements – sought to take the power of the labour and trade union movement from within and make of it communist machinery for the industrial transformation in Britain. The strategy's shift was more of form – from alliance to confrontation –than substance – stop seeking to lead the movement from inside. The NMM's support was small and concentrated in specific industries, particularly the miners in South Wales, Scotland, the North East of England and London. The new line was not only vaguely formulated, but it was also highly challenging to enforce inside the British trade unions. NMM members still defended the idea of the united front – that they were supposed to repudiate – and saw in the implementation of the new line as a threat to their previous work within the unions that would make their previous sympathisers their enemies (Martin, 1969, p. 110).

By 1927, the labour and trade union movement's purge of communist organisations had managed to diminish the strength of the NMM, blocking the unions' payment of affiliation, instructing local branches to ignore its circulars and to stop sending delegates to its conferences – which hit the movement's membership numbers (Worley, 2002, pp. 62-63; Kingsford, 1982, p. 90). The CPGB resisted the attacks and accused the trade union movement of a turn to the right and a blockage by its bureaucracy to the propagation of a militant position, as a response of a lack of rational arguments to defend their policy (MRC MSS.292/773/9/2, *Communist Party Conference, Party Trade Union Policy*, 19th January 1929). At the same time, it turned

against the Labour Party, accusing it of being the third capitalist party, which "lays claim to the title of Socialist Party but has nothing to do with socialism" (CPGB, *Class against Class. General Election Programme of the CPGB*, 1929, p. 5). It further denounced the Labour Party for subordinating the trade unions to its dictatorship on behalf of capitalism, rejecting working-class politics, and exploiting working-class organisations for national politics while advocating for industry rationalisation (Ibid). The CPGB committed itself to reviving communist activities in trade councils and pushing a revolutionary trade union policy (Ibid).

In the summer of 1929, the TUC General Council denounced the CPGB and the NMM for deliberately exercising disruptive actions inside the trade unions through a divide-and-conquer strategy – attacks on officials and policy, disclosure of confidential information in the press, intervention in disputes, negotiations, and elections, breakaways, and the promotion of unauthorised policies in unions and trade councils – seeking to overthrow its leadership and replace it with the control of the Communist International and the RILU (MRC MSS.292/773/9/2, Memorandum for the Finance and General Purposes Committee on Disruption, 6th July 1929).

In this context, the CPGB together with the NMM created two trade unions – the United Mineworkers of Scotland and the United Clothing Workers – and challenged the authority of the General and Transport Workers' Union through the London Busmen's movement – led by the CPGB – which aroused hostility from the official trade union leaders (Hinton, 1983, p. 153; Pelling, 1966, p. 200). It also sought to displace the London Trades Council by establishing the London Industrial Committee which proved a failure because it became "essentially just another meeting place, and another name, for London members of the National Minority Movement" (Worley, 2002, p. 174). In 1929, Harry Pollitt was substituted as General Secretary of the NMM by Arthur Horner – unsympathetic of the new line – but soon after George Allision became the movement's effective leader, together with Willian Allen (secretary of the United

Mineworkers of Scotland) and George Renshaw; party politicians rather than experienced trade unionists (Martin, 1969, p. 125).

Despite all the efforts of the CPGB and the NMM to take over the labour and trade union movement from within, the General Council's strategies, together with the movement's inner discrepancies and lack of resources, made sure that by the end of the 1920s such an approach had proved a failure. By early 1930s, the NMM showed signs of disintegration – in 1930 it had only 700 active members – and survived until 1935 in a somewhat diminished form. Not only did it suffer from the aggressive attacks of the General Council and the entire labour and trade union movement, but was also a victim of the disastrous effects of the New Line, the dislocation of the industries where it had established a base, permanent tension with the CPGB's Industrial Department, and unemployment that left many of its sympathisers unemployed and pushed many of those still employed to break their links with the movement to avoid expulsion from their union or workplace (Worley, 2002, p. 38). The NMM suffered from a constant change of personnel, tactical confusion, organisational disruption, and the co-existence of conflicting views (Martin, 1969, p. 127). It lacked resources, a machinery strong enough to build an independent campaign, and the capacity to contribute substantially to an industrial dispute from inside the trade union movement; it often appeared to be campaigning from outside the struggle (Ibid, p. 174). A movement that had been built based on the Comintern's so-called second period could neither adapt nor survive the hardships that the third period and its new line introduced.

The NMM sought to implement the communist policies and perspectives drafted by the Comintern and enforced by the CPGB at the workshops and factories between 1924 and 1931. Its experience demonstrated that, if the CPGB was to break the trilateral industrial accord between the state, the trade unions and employers' organisations, and to advance its industrial agenda, it needed to reshape its approach, as fighting from inside had proved unsuccessful.

4.4.2.- The NUWM's restructuring and the Communist turn towards the unemployed

In September 1929, the NUWM celebrated its sixth National Conference. The conference cancelled the option of mobilising the TUC in defence of the unemployed and condemned the Labour government for its attitudes towards the unemployed (Worley, 2002, p. 178). It altered the movement's structure, action approach, and its name abandoned the word "Committee" and remained only as the NUWM. The conference also renamed the sub-committee as Headquarters Advisory Committee – composed of members appointed by the NAC – strengthened the National Administrative Council – which was reconstituted to become representative of each district on a democratic basis – centralised the movement's direction, and established the women's department and the legal department (Worley, 2002, p. 178; Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, p. 64).

In 1930, during the fifth Congress of the RILU, in the face of the Minority Movement's crisis, the Congress proposed forming a broad united front programme of action – the Workers' Charter – to rally and organise the employed and unemployed together. It also called to consolidate the NUWM, integrating it to the Minority Movement, under its direct leadership (LHM CP/CENT/IND/11/09, *Resolutions of the fifth World Congress of the RILU*, August 1930, p. 107). However, the merging faced the active resistance of Wal Hannington, who considered that each had their specific field of activity (Harmer, 1987, 142). Beyond the field distinction of each movement, Hannington defended his movement not only from the attempt to subjugate it to the CPGB – hence to the RILU and the Comintern – but also from the insistence on reforming the labour and the trade union movement from inside. The NUWM's leadership had understood the futility of seeking to build an alliance with the TUC because the industrial accord between the state, the employers' federations and the trade unions had forced them to fight from outside. In fighting from outside the NUWM found its strength and only chance of success. The Charter campaign did not last long. Most of its delegates were NUWM

members, overrepresenting London and underrepresenting many other provinces, which resulted in an inadequate appreciation of local issues, concentrating mainly upon unemployment, and without a clear idea on the role the NMM should play. It proved a failure for the NMM – in one of the last efforts to survive – and the consolidation of the leadership of the NUWM as the communist organisation where the party would focus for the coming years (Martin, 1969, pp. 160-161).

While the NUWM's restructuring took place in 1929, since 1927 many activists of the CPGB had shifted their focus of attention from the workplace to the unemployed (Worley, 2002, p. 156). This was not a coincidence or a disconnected development; it derived from the Minority Movement's decline explained above and the revival of the NUWM, partly precipitated by its successful mobilisation of the unemployed miners in South Wales and Scotland, areas where the CPGB had established a strong basis of support (Worley, 2002, p. 40). The NUWM's membership began to rise and its recruits joined the communist cause, not necessarily as members, but at least as sympathisers, which raised the party's standing among the British working class (Worley, 2002, p. 176).

Apart from the deterioration of the Minority Movement, the turn of the CPGB's attention towards the organisation of the unemployed came from the fact that the members of the CPGB were progressively losing their jobs with no opportunity to find new ones. By December 1930, around 40% of the CPGB's membership were unemployed – compared to only 6% in 1926 (Worley, 2002, p. 178; Branson, 1985, p. 74). In the 1929 election, the CPGB put forward a policy that allocated the totality of the unemployment relief burden upon the National Exchequer – based on a non-contributory scheme, with a 50-50 coverage between the state and the employers – increased unemployed maintenance rates, abolished the not-genuinely-seeking-work clause – introduced by the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1927 – and transferred the unemployed relief administration to an unemployment insurance

commission – composed of representatives of the NUWM, the trade unions and factory committees (CPGB, *Class against Class. General Election Programme of the CPGB*, 1929, pp. 18-19).

The attention of the RILU, the Comintern and the CPGB entailed pressures for the NUWM to follow the line outlined by Moscow and enforced by the CPGB. The main criticism against the unemployed workers' movement was its excessive focus on legalism – with a newly created legal department which offered assistance to the unemployed to bring their claims to the umpire (Branson, 1985, p. 78). Throughout 1930, the CPGB's Political Bureau – reflecting the vision of RILU circles – criticised the NUWM's concentration on legal work rather than mass agitation, its tendency to become a kind of specialised trade union, to be a tightly organised dues-paying body (Branson, 1985, p. 78; Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, pp. 68-70).

Once and again, Hannington resisted the CPGB's temptations to co-opt the movement. He was wise to circumvent the RILU's and CPGB's invocations, claiming publicly to understand the theoretical aspects of the class-against-class policy and recognising the legitimacy of some of the complaints – the excessive focus of the movement for legal aid for the unemployed and the need to balance the legal work and agitation – without altering in substance the practise of the NUWM. As such, the unemployed workers' movement continued to approach the trade unions, and the legal department continued its pragmatic aid for the unemployed (Worley, 2002, p. 178, 238). The RILU and the CPGB continued seeking to control the NUWM, always facing the clever manoeuvres of Hannington, which were somehow tolerated; after all, it was difficult to turn against the leadership of a movement that by late 1931 was recruiting over 2000 members a week and was feeding the membership of the CPGB (Worley, 2002, p. 275; Branson, 1985, p. 79). Despite decreasing the criticisms of the NUWM, the figure of Hannington remained a concern for the CPGB. He defended misaligned characters like Horner and developed tensions with Pollitt, the CPGB's General Secretary, and

came under the spotlight of the Comintern whose view was that he was a threat to the party should he continue to lead the NUWM (Campbell & McIlroy, 2008, pp. 71-72).

4.5.- Unemployment relief, economic crisis, and the Constitutional crisis

The publication of the Blanesburgh Report in 1927 opened a period of hostile attitudes against the unemployed – backed by the labour and trade union movement – that would result in the use of unemployment relief against the NUWM. These measures against the unemployed coalesced with an increase in unemployment figures – reaching by the end of the decade over 10% of the insured population (Garside, 1990, p. 5) – the world economic crash, and followed by the second Labour government that soon was at a crossroads which ended up with the Constitutional crisis of August 1931.

The Unemployment Insurance Act (1927) – that followed the recommendations of the report of the Blanesburgh Committee and the Unemployment Insurance Bill – introduced the rule that to receive benefit, applicants required a minimum of thirty contributions paid as an insured contributor in respect of the two years immediately preceding the date on which application for benefit is made (TNA CAB 27/348, *Draft of a Bill to Amend the Unemployment Insurance Acts, 1920 to 1926*, 1927). It also limited the benefit amount and introduced the not-genuinely-seeking-work clause, that forced the claimants to prove that they were looking for a job (Ibid). In *The Meaning of the Blanesburgh Report* (MML, YD08/MEA, 1927), Hannington protested against the measures taken, but especially against the government's use of members of the labour movement in the Blannesburgh Committee – Frank Hodges, secretary of the International Miners' Federation, Margaret Bondfield, TUC member, and Albert Edward Holmes, secretary of the National Printing and Kindred Federation – to justify the attack against the unemployed: "a favourite trick of the British ruling class when it wishes to introduce anti-working class legislation is, first to inveigle representatives of the trade union and Labour

movement to sit upon a Committee of Enquiry, then to issue a report with the Labour members of the Committee as joint signatories recommending the attack" (MML, YD08/MEA, 1927), p. 3). He seemed to be permanently aware of the state's methods to marginalise the unemployed workers' movement through the labour and trade union leaders.

The 1929 elections gave the Labour Party a second chance to form a government – after the short-lived experience of 1924. However, its ambiguous result – 38.1% for the Conservatives, 37.1% for Labour and 23.5% for the Liberals – produced monetary uncertainty curtailed by the resignation of S. Baldwin soon after (Mowat, 1968, p. 355). Nevertheless, a minority Labour government augured a lack of opportunity to run the administration with the – ever strong – Conservatives' independence and autonomy. Ramsay MacDonald – Prime Minister for the second time in the decade – chose a Cabinet of moderates and excluded the left. The leading figures of his Cabinet were: Arthur Henderson (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs), Phillip Snowden (Chancellor), James Thomas (Lord Privy Seal), and John Clynes (Secretary of State for the Home Department) (Mowat, 1968, p. 355). The Prime Minister appointed Phillip Snowden and James Henry Thomas to take over the administration of unemployment relief without the executive power and the support required to initiate significant initiatives. The solution to – probably – the biggest problem of the interwar years in Britain was reduced to the development of a scheme of public works that would later be – briefly – strengthened with the Unemployment Insurance Bill that enlarged the Treasury's expenditure on unemployment relief (Mowat, 1968, p. 362; Pugh, 2002, p. 197).

The Wall Street crash in October 1929 produced its worst effects in Britain during the early 1930s. The breakdown of the post-war international economy forced Britain out of the Gold Standard in 1931 – which constrained the capacity of the Treasury and the Bank of England to modify the exchange rate – marginalised Britain's exports – which reduced from £839 million in 1929 to £666 in 1930, and £461 in 1931 – and forced tariffs up (Mowat, 1968,

p. 358). But probably an aspect – often overlooked – that constrained, even more, the government's capacity to counteract the world crisis's effects was the tax system. Interwar British administrations faced inflexible political interests over taxation: its widely spread burden across classes guaranteed intense public scrutiny over tax policy and a robust mobilisation of interests, mainly from the middle and upper classes, articulated by both Conservative and independent circles (Cronin, 1991, p. 93). These interests influenced the government to keep taxes down, which the Labour Government – careful not to disturb the Conservatives to prevent the weakening of its already crumbling legitimacy – accepted and opted to focus the attacks on the unemployed (Ibid).

The Labour Government developed strategies to marginalise the organisation of the unemployed in two ways: first, it removed from local governments the administration of relief; and second, it sought to withdraw aid from the unemployed who participated in NUWM activities. The Local Government Act of 1929 eliminated the Boards of Guardians – where the NUWM had focused much of its activities during the 1920s – and instead created the Public Assistance Committees, that delegated the responsibility of investigation to a subdivision named the Guardians' Committees (Cronin, 1991, p. 96; Ward, 2013, p. 67). This legislation was intended to reduce local government spending on unemployment relief by reducing the flexibility of the local authorities to provide assistance – seeking to curtail the local political action of the NUWM. While it did not meet the aim of reducing local government spending, it guaranteed that from then onwards, the central government was the only source of new finance, and it further damaged the already hard-hit localities affected by high levels of unemployment and poverty, areas where new business investment would not locate because of the imposition of higher rates (Cronin, 1991, p. 96). This move of the Labour government forced the NUWM to seek to negotiate effectively with the national government that, paradoxically, was pushing

it out of the bargaining accord through the action of the labour and trade union movement so it did not have a legitimate and legal lobbying opportunity.

In 1930, the NUWM organised the third National Hunger March as a clear challenge to a Labour Government. The NUWM demanded a series of benefits difficult for any government to meet, which would, however, win the broadest support of the jobless workers. The NUWM demanded an increase in the unemployed benefit scales; the removal of the not-genuinely-seeking-work clause; the restoration of the benefits for all unemployed who had been disqualified under the previous government's administration; the continuance of unemployment benefits unless suitable employment at trade union rates had been refused; the introduction of national plans of work schemes at trade union rates and conditions; the abolition of all test and task work under the boards of guardians; and the assurance of full trade union conditions for all unemployed transferred under the industrial transference scheme (Kingsford, 1982, pp. 113-114). Far from meeting the demands, the Ministry of Labour introduced local assessors' boards to examine doubtful claims for benefit. At the same time, Oswald Mosley began his fight against the Labour Government's policies, submitting a memorandum on unemployment, to which the Government reacted firmly (Kingsford, 1982, p. 118).

Within this context, the Labour Government developed a strategy to use Unemployment Insurance to punish the NUWM. In October 1930, the Minister of Labour issued a note on Certain Alleged Abuses to the Unemployment Insurance, indicating that the evidence available did not show any illegal conduct from unemployed workers benefited by the Unemployment Insurance scheme. The Minister enlisted the cases where they envisaged abuses: married women and seasonal workers, both of them being difficult to prove as it was hard to demonstrate the intention or absence of intention to take work if it were available. In the research on abuses to the Unemployment Assistance scheme, no mention was made of the participants of the hunger marches or members of the NUWM (TNA, CAB 27/438,

Memorandum by the Minister of Labour on Certain Alleged Abuses to the Unemployment Insurance, 20th October 1930). However, in that same year, several notes were issued devising action to take regarding the unemployed workers recipient of Unemployment Assistance who had participated in the hunger marches. Atkinson Price, M.P. for Gloucester, challenged an Umpire's decision (no. 1067, Vol I) that refused benefit to a claimant for participating in an unemployed march and protested against the refusal to provide vacant tickets[5] to persons known to be taking part in an unemployed march (TNA PIN 7/126, *Minutes*, 26th March 1930). The Acting Secretary contended that there was no doubt about the political objective of the NUWM's marches and that the endeavour to obtain employment on the way was secondary, concluding that the marchers did not meet the criterion of marching to search for work during the period of the march (TNA PIN 7/126, *Minutes*, 31st March 1930). The Acting Secretary added that when the marchers claimed that they marched to London seeking work, and despite the likelihood of finding a better job in London and its surroundings than at their districts, it could be alleged that the fact that they returned home by the end of their journey proved that the march's original object was purely political and that during their stay in London they were not available for work (TNA PIN 7/126, *Minutes*, 31st March 1930). After hearing her colleagues' recommendations, Margaret Bondfield, Minister of Labour, reaffirmed the continuity of the existing procedure about providing relief to hunger marchers: claims would be referred to the Court of Referees and the Umpire for a decision seeking to disallow marchers (Ibid). In June that year, James Allison Glen, M.P., called to attention that the NUWM had made a careful study of the Umpire's decisions and had instructed the marchers on how to avoid being disallowed on the ground that they were not available for work during the marches. This would prevent the Umpire to disallow these claimants unless the state sent a representative

[5] Tickets needed by the unemployed traveling in search of work in another area where they lived. On the presentation of these tickets at Exchanges named upon them, a signature of the register would be accepted at those places where the search was likely to be productive, instead of at the Exchange at which the book is lodged.

to argue that "where a man takes part in a political pilgrimage he creates a presumption of non-availability which would ordinarily require something more than a mere formal proof before it could be rebutted" (TNA, PIN 7/126, *Minutes*, 16th June 1930). Throughout 1930, the Ministry of Labour issued memorandums for the Divisional Controllers to warn them of unemployed marchers claiming benefits. The Ministry delivered clear instructions to avoid issuing vacant tickets to claimants taking part in a march. When someone, who had taken part in a march, claimed benefit of a period in which a march took place, the claimants were to be required proof of unemployment and the fulfilment of statutory conditions, that they would hardly be able to prove (TNA PIN 7/126, *Claims for benefit by Unemployment Marchers*, 1930). One Umpire's decision regarding a claim for benefit in September 1930 illustrates the kind of argumentation used to decline benefit for participants in hunger marches organised by the NUWM: the question to be decided is "whether the claimant and his fellow marchers were available for work during the period mentioned (1-8 May) or during any part of it" (TNA PIN 7/126, *Decision by the Umpire, Court of Referees of Merthyr Tydfil, Case No. 43/11*, 10th September 1930). Later it stated that if the marchers sought to arrive in London for the purpose for which the march was organised, it could be inferred that they had no other purpose, and consequently they were not available for work until their goal of the march was fulfilled. It also alleged that:

> *"All the 65 marchers from Merthyr not only set out together but returned together. None of them was under any obligation to look for work, but the fact that not a single man broke away from the body of marchers, even though the areas through which they passed must have presented more favourable prospects of employment than in South Wales, is so extraordinary as to indicate a loyalty to the aim and purpose of the organised march which cannot be accounted for on any other ground than that there was a determination on the part of the claimant and his companions to occupy their time solely for and fixed purpose of demonstrating to and in London"* (TNA PIN 7/126, *Decision by the Umpire, Court of Referees of Merthyr Tydfil, Case No. 43/11*, 10th September 1930).

We can infer that when jobless people joined a Hunger March of the NUWM to London, they were not genuinely seeking for work, but demonstrating to pressure the government and win the sympathy of people on their way. The government should have understood that, but it sought strategies to marginalise the movement and avoid more people joining it. The NUWM leaders were aware of the Government's strategies to remove benefit from those who could not prove to be continuously looking for a job and hence instructed the marchers to pretend to be searching for work during the marches. The strategy was to claim benefit for the whole of the period they were on the march and secure the Excuse Form (U.I. 88) on which they could declare their inability to sign their local register while away on a march. The form should be signed by householders locally, instead of by "comrades at Headquarters" because otherwise, the Ministry of Labour could object. After all, the movement officials did not know every marcher personally. The NUWM also advised its members that, when attending a Court of Referees, they should be accompanied by a NUWM branch representative (TNA PIN 7/126, *Claims for Marchers Benefit during the National Hunger March*, 12th May 1930).

The Labour government – severely circumscribed and partly a victim of the economic depression – faced in 1931 the Conservative's opposition against its expenditure and borrowing, especially on unemployment relief, together with difficulties to balance the budget and regain confidence in British finance (Mowat, 1968, p. 384; Cronin, 1991, p. 93). The government appointed a Committee on National Expenditure, under George May. In the summer of 1931, a Cabinet Economic Committee considered its report estimating a deficit of £120 million by the spring of the following year if economic policy remained unchanged, and proposed taxation for £24 million together with economies of £96 million, of which £66.5 million would come from reductions in unemployment expenditures – the remaining spending on this should be made out of income instead of further borrowing (Mowat, 1968, p. 384). The need for new credits from French and US financial institutions and the approach of the due date

of former credits precipitated the crisis. The creditors insisted on further economies as conditions of advancing new loans and time was running out in the middle of Parliamentary recess. The Cabinet's disagreements on the extent and form of the economies culminated in the Constitutional crisis of August 1931: MacDonald presented his resignation to the King, who refused and instead proposed a National Government composed of members of the three main parties. The new government included key members of the Conservative Party like S. Baldwin as Lord President, Samuel Hoare as Secretary of State for India, Phillip Cunliffe in charge of the Board of Trade and Neville Chamberlain as Minister of Health. MacDonald, the Labour leader, would govern with strong Conservatives officially as his subordinates but in practise he was forced to be the face of an administration under the Conservative line (Mowat, 1968, p. 384).

Conclusions

Between 1927 and 1931, interwar British administrations managed to redirect the attitudes of the labour and trade union movement against the NUWM – together with the CPGB and the NMM – to force them out of the legitimate sphere of protest and ostracise them.

In the aftermath of the 1926 General Strike, the state, highly pressured from the employers' representatives of the old industries, developed the aggressive 1927 Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act to penalise the labour movement for its support to the striking miners and to prevent any further disruption to productivity. The Act outlawed sympathetic strikes – those outside of the trade or industry in dispute – and those that sought to coerce the government or intimidate the community; imposed strict restrictions on picketing; made unlawful to require any union member to contribute to the political fund unless the members had delivered notice in writing of their willingness to participate and had not withdrawn the

notice; forbid civil servants from joining associations other than those only confined to the Civil Service with no connection with external bodies.

The state's search for industrial peace to guarantee governability and political stability benefited from Alfred Mond's initiative to organise cooperation talks between the two sides of the industry. The cooperation talks helped to legitimise the trade unions under the state's gaze and, simultaneously, to legitimise state's action against the extra-parliamentary dissident left, linked to the CPGB. The state facilitated industrial talks seeking harmony in industry – first in the form of the Mond-Turner Talks and later in the tripartite conversations between the NCEO, FBI and TUC – to reduce class tensions and encourage industrial prosperity. The industrial conversations represented a step forward in high-level industrial talks. On the one hand, they failed to advance joint industrial policy and make the new governing institutions effective representatives of their membership. On the other hand, the cooperation talks ensured the TUC's leadership of the trade union movement and its incorporation as a governing institution committed to remove the dissident communist organisations from the legitimate spaces of dissent and force them to fight from outside the parliamentary system.

The TUC General Council, in its commitment to fulfilling the requirements to remain a governing institution, did its best to sever links with communist organisations from the labour and trade union movement and, despite it stumbled with the resistance of trade unions and trade councils which defended the work of the NUWM in favour of the unemployed, it still managed to see the vanishment of the NMM by the end of the decade and the discredit of the NUWM across a broad spectrum of the labour and trade union movement.

The increase of unemployment by the end of the 1920s, together with the NUWM's restructuring and the CPGB's attention towards the unemployed, made the unemployed workers' movement a robust machinery to counteract the state's attack against dissident communist organisations. The economic crisis initiated in 1929 gave way to the failure of the

second Labour government and the formation of the National Government that would govern for the remaining years of the interwar period. The National Labour Government committed to overcome the economic crisis and, simultaneously, reshape the governing strategies to marginalise the NUWM.

While during the second half of the 1920s, the action of the General Council proved successful in forcing the NUWM and the CPGB out of the recognised institutions of political and industrial representation, the next decade, with an increase in unemployment levels and a strengthening of the unemployed workers' movement, forced the state to reshape its strategy to marginalise the NUWM. The next chapter analyses the statecraft of discontent management during the 1930s that required the use of state coercive powers to counteract the advancement of the unemployed workers' movement.

5.- Violence and hostility to marginalise the NUWM, 1931-1939

Introduction

This chapter explains the state's strategy to undermine the influence of the NUWM from the formation of the National Government in the aftermath of the Constitutional crisis of August 1931 to the end of the interwar period in 1939. The chapter focuses on the state's power in the form of legislation and other coercive apparatus, primarily the police. It also highlights continuity in the TUC's efforts to marginalise the NUWM as part of its efforts to remain a central governing institution. The chapter also looks at how, in the second half of the decade, the CPGB sought to build alliances with the social democratic parties. This isolated the unemployed workers' movement who continued to fight alone.

The previous chapter closed with the arrival of the National Government from the political crisis that culminated in August 1931 when King George V intervened to avoid collapse of the Government. Disagreements in the Cabinet about the economy's need to renegotiate credits with French and US financial institutions had ended in a dead-end for the Labour government. Rather than resign, Ramsay MacDonald was encouraged to form a coalition with the leadership of the opposition parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, that became a government under a Labour leadership following the Conservative line.

One of the first actions of the National Government was to take Britain off the Gold Standard in September 1931. In the October elections, the Conservative Party won four hundred and seventy seats, the Labour Party forty-nine, the Liberal Nationals thirty-five, and the Liberals thirty-three. It reinforced the Conservative Party, guaranteeing its dominance for the rest of the decade in the form of the National Government despite some expectations that it would be short-lived due to the challenges associated with balancing the budget and restoring confidence (Mowat, 1968, p. 399; Pugh, 2002, p. 224). Neville Chamberlain, a prominent

figure by then in the Conservative Party, became Chancellor of the Exchequer in November 1931. Initially powerful, he was able to dictate policy and dominate the Cabinet. Under Chamberlain, the Treasury enjoyed a dominant monetary policy position as officials largely determined policy on both the Bank rate and exchange rate (Peden, 2000, 253; Mowat, 1968, p. 414).

The National Government promoted a deflationary tendency and a more active role of the state in the economy. It combined protectionism, low interest and exchange rates, price-stability and rationalisation to reduce the national debt, avoid a decline in industrial production and, after the mid-1930s, finance rearmament, without undermining confidence in British finance (Mowat, 1968, p. 399; Peden, 2000, p. 248). The decade saw the abandonment of the use of public work as a tool of employment policy. Instead, the government pursued public investment by lowering the interest rate – a change backed by Keynes (Peden, 2000, p. 249, 269; Mowat, 1968, p. 457). The National Government was aware that an unstable exchange rates was detrimental of the international payment system that affected trade, so it committed to reducing fluctuations (Peden, 2000, p. 285; Mowat, 1968, p. 414). The same was necessary with the interest rate, so the Government committed to keeping it low (around 2%) until the end of the decade to help balance the budget (Peden, 2000, p. 260; Mowat, 1968, p. 457). The government's deflationary policies reduced the salaries of ministers, judges, members of Parliament, teachers, police and the armed forces, as well as unemployment allowances (Mowat, 1968, p. 404, 414; Cronin, 1991, p. 106).

In line with Keith Middlemas's theory of corporate bias, during the 1930s the British state, together with business and trade unions, understood the importance of achieving a form of corporate accord that was immune to party differences (Middlemas, 1979, p. 214). The governing institutions proved their understanding that, despite the problematic economic

atmosphere, the priority was the defence of political harmony, and their task was to continue pushing the political extremes out of parliamentary politics (Middlemas, 1979, p. 214).

The chapter is divided into six sections. The first draws on the mutiny in Invergordon in September 1931 and its aftermath to show the Government's bias against communism when it suspected its infiltration in the state apparatus. The second section focuses on state power by discussing the use of the police and criminal legislation to attack CPGB's activists and the NUWM. The third section explains how the lack of legal elements in the hands of the state to marginalise the dissent extra-parliamentary left forced the National Government to update legislation to facilitate the prosecution of NUWM and CPGB's members. The fourth section of the chapter analyses the state's attempt to remove the management of unemployment relief from the hands of local authorities who were subject to political pressure from NUWM activists to provide more assistance at higher rates. The fifth section draws on the TUC's role in excluding the dissenting and 'extreme' anti-parliamentary left from the labour and trade union movement. The sixth section analyses the shift in the CPGB's attitudes to the NUWM and its attempts to form a united front after 1933.

5.1 – The mutiny in Invergordon in September 1931

The reductions in the salaries of the armed forces produced the mutiny in Invergordon in September 1931. This concerned the state because it reflected signs that the main aim of corporate bias was strained: the avoidance of political confrontation and the arrival of crisis. The Navy mutiny in September 1931 was the sailors' immediate reaction to the cut in their salaries that the state unsuccessfully sought to link with communist influence. Despite the government's suggestions that it was somehow connected with communism, investigations proved the mutiny to be a genuine reaction of the soldiers to the reduction of their salaries with no communist incitement. However, the CPGB took the event as an excellent opportunity to

spread their propaganda among the armed forces seeking sympathy among those suffering the consequences of the economic policies developed by the National Government to counteract the financial crisis's effects.

On 3rd September 1931, the Admiralty informed the Navy that the financial crisis obliged the Government to take immediate and stringent measures to balance the budget. The Committee on National Expenditure had recommended reductions in spending on the Navy, reducing sailors' salaries by 18% from 1st October (TNA ADM 178/129, *Invergordon Mutiny: reports*, 1932). The Admiralty expected the cuts to be accepted by all sailors on ground of loyalty. However, in the absence of an explanation of the government's formula to impose the reductions, they felt disproportionately affected compared to other sections of the community (Ibid).

The mutiny took place in the port of Invergordon on the 15th and 16th of September. The rebellion consisted of portions of the ships' companies absenting from duty, making the Fleet unable to proceed to sea for exercises. The Government was forced to modify the Navy's reductions: instead of the original 18%, the reduction was only 10% (*Ibid*). As soon as the Atlantic Fleet arrived at its Home Ports, the MI5 began to investigate the situation and to search for further mutiny plans. The Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, in his speech at the House of Commons on 21st September, recognised the unfair casualties caused to the teachers, the police and the three defence services due to the cuts introduced by his Government and offered to limit the reductions to a maximum than 10%, without affecting the balance of the budget (*Ibid*).

To understand the Government's reaction to the mutiny, it is crucial to consider fist the background of communist surveillance in Britain. Since early in the twentieth century, the Home Section of the Secret Service Bureau – responsible for investigating and countering foreign espionage in Britain – focused on surveillance of subversive communist organisations

and individuals (Brinson & Dove, 2014, p. 9, 14). In 1931, the Secret Service – Military Intelligence Section 5 or MI5 – formerly part of the War Office, became an interdepartmental intelligence service working across government departments, including the Home Office, and with the Attorney General's Office, the Director of Public Prosecutions and chief officers of police (Andrew, 2010, p. 130). Despite its civil character during the 1930s, it approached espionage and countersubversion in military terms.

The director of MI5, Vernon Kell, and Eric Holt-Wilson, developed a strategy to counteract what they saw as a significant threat to the realm: communist activity, especially when it involved military subversion (Andrew, 1985, p. 303). Since the 1920s, MI5 had infiltrated the CPGB, seeking evidence to arrest and prosecute communists for subversion in the armed forces. In 1925, twelve members of the CPGB were charged on sedition under the Incitement to Mutiny Act of 1797, and in 1928 MI5 investigated 79 cases of soldiers or men seeking to enlist in the army suspected of being communists (Ibid, p. 320, 360). MI5 constantly warned the Government about the distribution of subversive propaganda among the forces that could disrupt discipline and morale (Ibid, pp. 360-361).

A few days after the mutiny, the first reports on its motives left out the fears of communist involvement and suggested that the primary causes of the outbreak was the sailors' perceptions of disproportionate reductions, the suddenness of the decision, and the lack of effective channels for complaint (TNA ADM 178/129, *Invergordon Mutiny: reports*, 1932). Despite the absence of evidence of communist influence on the mutiny, after the event it was discovered that pamphlets were distributed, probably by anti-militarist groups potentially linked to the CPGB. The pamphlets encouraged sailors to carry on the struggle and to refuse any pay reduction. CPGB activity was identified in Plymouth, Portsmouth and Chathar. This ended in the detention of two members of the CPGB, attempting to provide sailors with

pamphlets containing propaganda with anti-militarist content (TNA KV 2/595, *Appendix II, Invergordon and after*, September 1931).

There is evidence of investigations into suspected communists even before the mutiny occurred. This links CPGB activities to the seduction of members of the armed forces to cause sedition or disaffection after the event. The Director of Public Prosecutions instructed that "any persons found distributing copies of it [the *Soldiers' Voice*] to members of the Forces" should be arrested and charged (TNA KV 2/1772, *John Gollan*, July 1931). For the trials in Court, Vernon Kell encouraged prosecutors to be prepared for statements presented by the defendants that might "endeavour to entangle on points of Communist doctrine" on which the prosecutor was expected to "be quite ignorant" (Ibid). He also required witnesses to be ready to speak about the effect of propaganda on soldiers and to say that nothing prevented soldiers from belonging to genuine political parties – the CPGB was not considered as such because it pledged to the overthrow of the existing form of Government by violent means – or to attend political meetings as far as they did not take an active part in them (Ibid).

The Navy began identifying and punishing the sailors involved in the mutiny, especially the instigators. The International Labour Defence immediately protested against the campaign against sailors who "recently courageously resisted the starvation policy of the MacDonald government" (TNA HO 144/22373, *Letter from the International Labour Defence to the British Consul General*, 23rd September 1931). However, the War Office was determined to punish the mutiny's ringleaders and to demonstrate that "the steady flow of communist propaganda, intended to undermine the morals and discipline of the Forces cannot be ignored and must rightly be considered as a contributory factor" (TNA HO 144/22373, *Memorandum by the War Office*, 5th October 1931). The Admiral Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, John Kelly, seeking to reduce the penalties to the sailors involved, recognised that they had been potentially influenced by the example and success of direct action conducted by trade unions (TNA ADM

178/129, *Comment of John Kelly, Admiral Commander-in-Chief of the Atlantic Fleet, during the State of Discipline in Atlantic Fleet*, 9th November 1931).

In February 1932, James Maxton, Scottish Labour, asked the Home Secretary in the House of Commons how many people had been imprisoned on account of inciting to mutiny and if they were treated as political offenders. Herbert Samuel, the Home Secretary, claimed that they were not treated as political offenders and that the only sentences were for incitement to mutiny against Allison, Shepherd, Wilkinson, Priestly, and Paterson (TNA HO 144/22373, 25th February, 1932). The first two were accused of "feloniously, maliciously, and advisedly endeavoured to seduce sailors serving in the Navy from their duty of allegiance encouraging them to commit acts of mutiny" (TNA KV 2/595, *Files of George Allison*, 8th October 1931).

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Kindal-Atkinson, called for the introduction of permanent legislative powers, at least limited to matters concerning the armed forces, to fix responsibility on particular persons for distributing literature to the troops because existing legal powers did not contemplate provisions regarding the right of search (TNA HO 144/22373, *Correspondence to the Secretary of State*, 26th October 1931). John Anderson, who would later be Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, Home Secretary, and Chancellor of the Exchequer, denounced the increasingly prevalent attempts to distribute seditious literature to soldiers and called for power to deal summarily with such cases by the imposition of sentences of imprisonment (Ibid). Vernon Kell recognised the difficulties associated with control printing and distribution of literature of a seditious and revolutionary character intended to subvert the forces' loyalty (TNA HO 144/22373, *Letter of Vernon Kell to Kindal-Atkinson*, 15th October 1931). These concerns would later influence the legislative process to strengthen the state's coercive powers that derived from the Incitement to Disaffection Act 1934, as discussed below. The mutiny in Invergordon of September 1931 proved to be a turning point for MI5 and the prosecution of communists. The event exacerbated the fears of naval subversion, created a

purge in the forces' ranks, developed a strategy for linking communists to the initiators of the mutiny, and increased MI5's powers. That year, MI5 was given the power to investigate and combat communist subversion former attribution of the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police – and acquired the experts' services on countersubversion of Scotland Yard. MI5's primary focus remained communist subversion in the armed forces, searching especially for sign contained in the publications of the *Soldiers' Voice* and the *Red Signal* (Andrew, 1985, p. 362; 2010, p. 120). Alongside this process of searching for potential threats from communism to the Army and Navy's discipline and loyalty, MI5 began monitoring dangers from Nazi espionage to the realm for the first time. This followed years of cooperation with the German authorities chasing German communist refugees seeking asylum in the UK (Brinson & Dove, 2014, p. 16). The mutiny in Invergordon proved that the state reserved the use of criminal law against the usual scapegoats: the communists (Ewing & Gearty, 2001, p. 239).

5.2.- The state violence against the NUWM leadership

The literature on the NUWM addresses the actions of the Government against the movement, with several references to the use of the police and the development of legislation to provide the state with increased capacity to arrest and prosecute the movement's leaders through the legal figure of the crime of Incitement to Disaffection, especially after 1932. Henry McShane pointed out that after the 1932 Hunger March, the National Labour Government began to move forcefully against the NUWM, with, for example, local police bans on demonstrations (McShane, 1978, p. 194). Don Watson concurred that the 1932 Hunger March generated the most conflict with the state and the police (Watson, 2014, p. 115). Peter Kingsford suggested that during that march, Scotland Yard believed that the best way to disarm the marchers was to watch their leaders and arrest them when necessary (Kingsford, 1982, p. 149). Wall Hannington denounced that the Government targeted the NUWM for espionage through agents

provocateurs, police informants and spies (Hannington, 1977, p. 142). Throughout his book *Unemployed Struggles* (1977), Hannington related the many cases in which the police attacked the unemployed marchers on their way to London and of unfair trials against the movement members.

During the early 1930s, the state intended to neutralise the unemployed movement by targeting its leadership. This section explains the specific circumstances in which the NUWM's leaders were arrested, the clumsiness and lack of coordination between intuitions of the state when processing the cases, and the way it links to the legislation on incitement to disaffection.

Sidney Elias was arrested in February 1931, a year after he committed the offence of street collections for a hunger march. The Prime Minister's Office protested to the Home Secretary, Clynes, because Elias had been arrested by members of the Special Branch at a demonstration of the NUWM in London and released an hour later after the fine had been paid, when "he could have been arrested at any time within the past 13 months and chose to arrest him at the moment of a demonstration of unemployed men, an action which might well have provoked serious disturbance" (TNA HO 144/19197 *Letter to Clynes, Secretary of State for Home Department*, 19th March 1931). This suggests that the Government wanted to neutralise the leadership of the NUWM – arresting one of its leaders for a negligible reason when the movement was gaining strength – but, on the other hand, remained worried about damage to public relations. Later that year, Sid Elias suggested that the arrest of over 150 NUWM's members was the National Government's reaction against the intensification of the movement's activities that restored the extensive use of violence and repression to "smash the fighting spirit of the workers" (TNA DPP 2/121 *Statement to all branches by Sid Elias*, 5th October 1931).

In October 1932, during the biggest NUWM's hunger march, Wal Hannington delivered a speech in Trafalgar Square addressed to the police in which he explained that the NUWM also demonstrated on the police behalf, especially after the wage reduction to the police salaries

(TNA DPP 2/121 *Memoranda of the Metropolitan Police*, 31st October 1932). On the same day, Patrick Devine, a member of the NUWM, read a letter signed by an officer with the initials P. C., explaining that a few days before, during a hunger marchers' demonstration in Hyde Park, he and other officials refused to intervene in a "peculiar brawl between police officers after one special constable hit on the head a detective" as a protest against a 5% cut announced to their salary (*Ibid*). The Government reacted issuing warnings against Sidney Elias, Wal Hannington, Tom Mann, and Emrys Llewellyn – officials of the movement – for causing disaffection among the members of the Metropolitan Police Force. Sam Langley, leader of one hunger march's contingent, was accused of disturbing the peace, inciting individuals to resist the police in the lawful execution of their duty and to disrupt the order of the Metropolis (TNA DPP 2/121 *Letter from the Director of Public Prosecutions to the Attorney General*, 9th February 1940; TNA DPP 2/121 *Memoranda on the Arrest of Samuel Langley*, 1st November 1932).

On 1st November, the inspectors Kitchener and Pasmore were instructed to arrest Hannington and, following the usual practise, search the premises to obtain evidence which might support the charge (TNA TS 27/397 *Brief of Hearing of Action*, December 1933). The reports of the arrest testify that no force was used to enter the offices of the NUWM and that the arrest was made quite peaceably (Ibid). The police searched the offices of the movement and took, among other documents, the original of the handwritten letter signed "PC" (apparently the original of the letter read by Patrick Devine at the NUWM demonstration at Trafalgar Square, to be used against Hannington) (TNA DPP 2/121 *Memoranda on the Arrest of Wal Hannington*, 2nd November 1932). On the Attorney General's directions, Sidney Elias was arrested and accused of incitement to sedition. He was found guilty and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. His conviction was based upon the documents found in a search made by the police at the NUWM's headquarters, supporting the theory that Elias incited Llewellyn and

Hannington to commit the crime of sedition (TNA DPP 2/121 *Letter from E. H. Tindal Atkinson to the Attorney General*, 28th February 1940). Tom Mann and Emrhys Llewellyn were arrested and committed to two months in prison for disturbing the public peace and inciting persons to take part in mass demonstrations calculated to involve contraventions of the provisions of the Seditious Meetings Act 1817 (Ibid).

These arrests did not go unnoticed. George Lansbury, leader of the Labour Party, brought the case of Tom Mann and Emrhys Llewellyn to the House of Commons. He protested against police's attitudes towards meetings and processions, arguing that since 1886 the practice of the police spying upon political opponents on meetings had grown, an act of despotic countries. "[I]f you look round in those meetings you will find someone there representing Scotland Yard as if it were the business of Scotland Yard to know what people's political opinions are", he stated (TNA PIN 7/126, *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 22nd December 1932). He further denounced that Communists were treated with much more severity than any Conservative, Liberal or Labour, or even fascist meetings, which made much more seditious speeches than any Communist, and added that the membership of the CPGB or the National Committee of the Unemployed was not unlawful (Ibid, pp. 1269-1270). The Home Secretary, Gilmour, highlighted that the NUWM's demonstrations created disorders in Hyde Park and dislocated London's traffic, making it necessary to call large numbers of police and special constables onto the streets and to consider calling out the military (Ibid, p. 129). He insisted that the NUWM did organise mass procession using methods of disorderly behaviour, "out of tune with and against the interests of the decent working man", and that the unemployed should seek work instead of organising mass demonstrations, because "it is not by disorderly or intimidatory methods that they are going to get that out of this Government" (TNA PIN 7/126, *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, 22nd December 1932).

In 1933, four NUWM's officials denounced the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Hugh Trenchard, for "wrongful entry by the Police of premises belonging to the Plaintiffs and the wrongful removal and conversion of documents found on the premises" when Hannington was arrested in November 1932 at the NUWM's headquarters (TNA TS 27/397 *Brief of Hearing of Action*, December 1933). The Government defended its performance and refuted improper retention of the documents found at the headquarters of the NUWM. Officials recorded that it was a "property manufactured by a criminal, equated to a hypothetical case of an anarchist who manufactured it a bomb, before he has put it to use", and contained subversive expressions like: "we must fight with our whole strength against the new starvation plans of this Government", "unemployed army", "Police terror" and "Spirit of Birkenhead", suggesting that the strikes were political instead of genuine trade disputes, and were conducted under orders from Moscow (TNA TS 27/397, *A Special Note Supplementary to the Brief on the Documents found at the Headquarters of the NUWM*, 1st December 1933).

Wilfrid Lewis, Junior Counsel to the Treasury and later a Judge of the High Court of Justice, believed that the search conducted by Hugh Trenchard raised questions about the police's right to carry out a systematic search of the premises without a search warrant and to detain documents found and treat them as evidence on a criminal charge. Lewis believed that because the police had no search warrant, it, therefore, took improper advantage of the opportunity given to search premises for which there was no authority (TNA PIN 7/126 *Opinion of Wilfrid Hubert Poyer Lewis*, 20th July 1933). Lewis concluded that Lord Trenchard should accept full responsibility for the inadequate possession of the documents (TNA PIN 7/126 *Opinion of Wilfrid Hubert Poyer Lewis*, 5th October 1933).

The state's attitudes against members of the NUWM can also be found in hostile treatment against marchers. For example, during the 1936 Hunger March, the Minister of Health, Kingsley Wood, instructed the Ministry's general inspectors not to provide relief on the

line of the march's route, to use every effort to prevent any action likely to encourage the march to repeat and to get in touch with the Chief Constables to secure full cooperation between the police and the inspectors (TNA MH 57/212, *Circular of the Minister of Health*, November 1936). The Minister also encouraged local authorities to refuse to offer facilities not necessitated by law to the marchers and reminded the local Councils to refuse to give any provision for abnormal contingencies because "as soon as a man joins the march he is no longer available for work and that in consequence, he ceases to be within their scope and to be eligible for unemployment assistance allowances" (Ibid).

The reactions of the three branches of the state against the NUWM acknowledged in this section demonstrate the state's limited commitment to liberty and the fragility of the Rule of Law in times of anxiety or perceived emergency when it comes to deal with radical views using ordinary rather than emergency law (Ewing & Gearty, 2001, p. 215, 272). The state used the law and the power of the police – in a controversial way – to marginalise the views expressed by the NUWM to the extent where anything they did or said was unlawful and penalised, using meaningless evidence – not even produced by the police – to support the charges against the movement's leadership (Ibid, p. 220, 227).

5.3.- The development of coercive legislation

The lack of legal means to prosecute communists and members of the unemployed workers' movement during the early 1930s led the state, influenced by the Armed Council, to update legislation to provide its coercive apparatus with more legal capacities to prosecute the troublesome communist groups that threatened the continuity and good performance of corporate bias.

In October 1933, the Security Service suggested taking "definite legal powers to counteract the dangerous operations of the CPGB, and its subsidiary agencies", organisations

designed for seditious conspiracy, seeking to bring into hatred and to excite disaffection against the Government and the Constitution, to excite in particular the Armed Forces and Government servants to discontent and disaffection, and to promote feelings of ill-will and hostility between different sections and classes in the country (TNA KV2/35878, October 1932). The Security Service stated that the Communist International financed and directed policy and activities of the CPGB, which was seeking to develop a violent revolution to overthrow the state through the dislocation of industry and trade, civil disorder, espionage and subversion of the discipline of the armed forces and public servants through subversive leaflets of the "Soldiers' Voice" (Ibid, p. 9). The Security Service highlighted the recrudescence of the activities of the NMM and the NUWM, involving violent demonstrations, meetings and marches, and welcomed their exclusion from the ranks of the Labour Party and the TUC (Ibid, p. 18). Additionally, the report pointed at the terrorist tactics used by the unemployed riots and the cost that civil disorder was causing to the state, which had "no powers adequate or designed to deal either with the actions of the CPGB or with those of its subsidiary organisations, which, because of their wide appeal, are already as dangerous as the parent body" (Ibid, p. 36).

In late 1934, the Government presented the Incitement to Disaffection Bill, intended to efficiently prevent and punish endeavours to seduce members of the armed forces from their duty of allegiance (TNA HL/PO/PU/1/1934/24825G5c56, *Incitement to Disaffection Act*, 1934). During October and November, the Bill was discussed in Parliament, raising questions about the political motivations behind it and associated it with intentions to prosecute members of the CPGB and with Trenchard's searches at the NUWM headquarters.

Labour MP David Kirkwood denounced the bill's political intentions as linked to fears of Communists and its antecedents in Trenchard's seizure to the NUWM's offices and regretted the efforts to create a non-accountable committee, that would remove the House's power to impeach its members: "we want to be able to impeach the Attorney-General on the Floor of the

House of Commons for anything that may take place as a result of this Bill" (KV 4/298, *Parliamentary debates on the Incitement to Disaffection Bill, 1934, House of Commons*, 30th October 1934, pp. 131-132). He noted that the bill sought to use the state's power through brutal force to marginalise members of an organisation because of fears of their ideas (Ibid). Labour MP John McGovern required assurances that the Bill was not intended to be a means of preventing propaganda because he suspected that the bill sought to prevent opposition political parties reaching the armed forces with their appeals and propaganda (Ibid, p. 169). Labour MP Wilmot pointed out that there had been only one question of mutiny in the Navy since the war, which had nothing to do with Communist agitators. Labour MP Dingle Foot pointed out that the Government was confusing a matter of discontent with protecting the armed forces from deflecting from their allegiance and opposed the bill for enlarging the Executive's power (Ibid, House of Commons, 2nd November 1934, p. 555). In response, the Solicitor-General, Donald Somervell, insisted that the bill was not calculated to impair the liberty of political opinion, but to stop the persuasion of Government's subordinates to disobey the law or the orders given to them, that had nothing to do with political opinion. He also suggested that the Government should not be blamed for prosecuting communists who were undermining the loyalty of the troops (Ibid, pp. 529-530). The Prime Minister noted that the bill was drafted to protect, not undermine, liberty (Ibid, p. 574).

In the House of Lords, the Secretary of State for War, Douglas Hogg, stated that the existing legislation was obsolete and made it difficult to prosecute people behind seditious plans and only permitted the state to fine people who were probably merely "some misguided or careless person, sometimes a man out of work, who is bribed for a few shillings" (House of Commons, 2nd November 1934, p. 555; House of Lords, 6th November 1934, p. 98). Labour MP David Kenworthy noted that the bill was intended to restore the general right of search and the invasion of the people's homes. For him, this meant that the police, having once obtained a

warrant, could go on a general "fishing expedition", breaking into anyone's house, seeking for evidence "to put away safely in prison somebody whom the Government do not like" (Ibid, p. 110). Rufus Isaacs pointed out the Government's notorious fear towards communist literature (Ibid, p. 124). Furniss believed that the Government was trying to introduce the bill to check the activities of communists and to warn CPGB's members, like Tom Mann, who was arrested as someone loitering with intent. Henry Sanderson asked "why have we waited three years? If these attempts at disaffection are so serious as the Government would have us believe, why have we waited all this time?" (Ibid, pp. 139-142). Arthur Ponsonby doubted that communist messages had any real impact on the armed forces' loyalty as exemplified by the fact that during the parliamentary debates no one presented any evidence of army indiscipline resulting from communist propaganda (Ibid, p. 313).

After the debates, the bill was approved on 16th November 1934. It made it unlawful to "maliciously and advisedly endeavour to seduce any member of the armed forces" and to possess any document that could potentially be used to commit sedition among the armed forces. Should a High Court judge find reasonable ground to suspect that such offence had been committed, a warrant could be granted to search premises, and every person found therein, and to seize anything found that could be used as evidence (TNA HL/PO/PU/1/1934/24825G5c56, *Incitement to Disaffection Act, 1934*, pp. 1-2). In its original form, the bill represented a genuine attack, through arbitrary police action, against the radical political views that seemed to jeopardise the accord designed by the state with the employers and the trade unions to smooth relations during the turbulent interwar years (Ewing & Gearty, 2001, p. 243). Parliamentarians, including establishment and conservative figures, managed to reduce the bill's lack of accountability and democratic elements. Nonetheless, the Government managed to pass the bill with its original spirit, legalising the use of permanent police powers to be used in ordinary

times (Ewing & Gearty, 2001, p. 251, 272). Nevertheless, it was not invoked for the coming three years, and in 1937 it was only used on one occasion (Ibid).

5.4.- The attempts to centralise and depoliticise Unemployment Management

As part of the strategies to prevent industrial discontent in interwar Britain, the Government discussed the possibility of centralising and removing the management of Unemployment Assistance from the realm of politics by creating an independent Commission. By January 1932, the Unemployment Fund was clearly insolvent and there were discrepancies in the transitional payments, managed by the Public Assistance Committees (PAC). PAC's officials – pressurised by NUWM's activists – struggled to determine the level of discretion they were supposed to apply on the means-tested transitional payments[6] for the unemployed, and often avoided conducting the means investigation to prevent reductions of the relief, freeing themselves from workless' criticisms and electoral failure (Ward, 2013, pp. 66-69; Garside, 1990, p. 66). It was often the case that each PAC ran the means test under its own rules, based on the local political situation, unemployment rate, rents, cost of living and tax structure of the region (Miller, 1979, p. 332). Between 1921 and 1935, 50% of all means-test decisions resulted in no deductions, while over 30% reduced the relief level, and 15-19% refused assistance (Miller, 1979, p. 332). By the end of 1932, the National Government decided to take over the implementation of the transitional payments in some localities, like Durham, to control the situation. This was extended in 1933. However, that could not remain the ultimate solution, and national standardisation was needed (Ward, 2013, p. 83).

The Government submitted to the House of Commons the Bill to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1920 and 1933 and to make further provision for the training

[6] The transitional payments' scheme was designed for those unemployed whose insurance rights had expired and who could not prove their need by the means-test investigation, and instead received relief determined by Poor Law assistance (Garside, 1990, p. 67).

and assistance of persons who are capable of, and available for, work but have no work or only part-time or intermittent work; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid (TNA ED 31/282, 8th November 1933). After the discussions in Parliament, the new Act reached the statute book in the summer of 1934.

The debate began in mid-1930, when the Prime Minister proposed to restore responsibility from the local authorities to the central departments and to set up a Panel of Cabinet Ministers to formulate policy on unemployment insurance's management, receive departmental reports, supervise unemployment figures, and devise programmes of work (TNA CAB 24/439, *Conclusions of a Conference of Ministers*, 16th June 1930, pp. 1-3). The national Government would be responsible for making unemployment policy without restrictions to protect civil servants being questioned by the Opposition or subjected to any pressure (Ibid).

The existing scheme of Unemployment Insurance had three main problems: firstly, the provision of funds, in the hands of the Treasury, was divorced from the responsibilities of expenditure, in the hands of the local authorities; secondly, people no longer entitled to benefit were still receiving relief; and thirdly, its administration provoked discrepancies between the minister of Labour and the Minister of Health. To address these problems, Neville Chamberlain, Chancellor of the Exchequer, proposed to centralise its administration in the hands of an independent national Commission which would provide uniformity to the scheme and remove political responsibility from the Government (TNA CAB 27/501, *Note by the Chancellor of the Exchequer*, 2nd December 1932). The Minister of Labour, Henry Betterton, opposed removing the management of unemployment relief from Parliamentary control (TNA CAB 27/501, *Memorandum by the Minister of Labour*, 12th December 1932). He acknowledged the value of Parliamentary debate against quarrels arising from issues such as unemployment and its role as an essential safety valve. Betterton doubted that the proposal would, in fact, remove the problem of unemployment from politics, because the House of

Commons would manage to debate the shortcomings of the Commission, and would also be a constant subject of discussion on Opposition platforms and become an issue at every election (TNA CAB 27/501, Memorandum by the Minister of Labour, 12th December 1932). Moreover, Henry Betterton feared the Government losing control over the relief scheme; "it would place the Government in the embarrassing position of defending a body it cannot control" (Ibid).

In January 1933, the Chancellor insisted that his proposals would not remove unemployment relief from the purview of Parliament because it would still vote on the Commission's funding and it would have many opportunities to discuss its general policy. It would avoid Unemployment Insurance being actioned by the political parties (TNA CAB 27/501, *Conclusions of a Meeting of the Unemployment Insurance Committee*, 18th January 1933). The Secretary of State for Scotland doubted that unemployment relief would be removed from party politics by setting up a Statutory Commission because it would be "the child of the present Government". Any unpopularity attached to the Commission's activities would undoubtedly be associated with the Government of the day (Ibid). The Minister of Labour insisted that the Government should avoid taking responsibility for the Commission's decisions if it could not exercise effective control (Ibid).

In the spring of 1933, the Cabinet started working on the Bill's draft, which was presented to Parliament by the end of that year. In part, the Unemployment Bill proposed the installation of the Unemployment Insurance Statutory Committee to give advice and assistance to the Minister of Labour in decision-making (TNA ED 31/282, *Bill to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act of 1920 and 1933*, 8th November 1933). The proposed committee was supposed to inform the Minister of Labour on the Unemployment Fund's financial condition. The Committee would consist of a chair and not less than three or more than five other members to be appointed by the Minister and hold office for five years and be eligible

for reappointment on the expiration of their term in office (Ibid, p. 53). In part II, the bill proposed the constitution of the Unemployment Assistance Board to assist persons in need of work and the promotion of their welfare and to facilitate people to find a job (Ibid, p. 29). The Board would decide if a person was not entitled to receive unemployment assistance (Ibid, p. 33) with that person's right to appeal to a tribunal (Ibid, p. 34). The Unemployment Assistance Board would have the right to propose new rules for conducting Unemployment Insurance, to be confirmed by the Minister and Parliament (Ibid, p. 37). The Treasury would make regulations to establish a fund – the Unemployment Assistance Fund – that would be controlled and regulated by the Unemployment Assistance Board (Ibid, p. 38).

In the bill's parliamentary discussions, Aneurin Bevan pointed out that it remained abusive to the unemployed workers (API Parliament, *Parliamentary discussions on the Unemployment Bill*, 4th December 1933). Aaron Charlton accused the bill of removing the great problem of unemployment – a matter affecting over a million people – from politics, placing it with an unelected and an undemocratic body that would jeopardise the continuation of civil peace in the country (Ibid). Labour MP John Parkinson believed that the Bill would take responsibility away from local authorities who understood the needs of the unemployed and place it in a Statutory Committee with extensive powers that would make decisions based only on reports without understanding the requirements of the areas or being in touch with the districts (Ibid). Neville Chamberlain defended the bill and refused to accept the accusations that there was no adequate Parliamentary control (Ibid). The 1934 Unemployment Bill was the most debated domestic legislation in Parliament during the interwar years and took close to seven months to pass through the houses (Ward, 2013, p. 163).

The final version of the Unemployment Act (TNA PIN 15/713, 1934), despite minor wording changes (Part I, art. 19), remained the same as the Bill proposed and was approved. It reached the statute book in June 1934 and established both the Statutory Committee and the

Assistance Board. The board was responsible for all the unemployed people who had exhausted their benefit and able-bodied unemployed (between 16 and 65 years of age) receiving Poor Law relief (Garside, 1990, p. 73). The UAB was expected to remove the PACs' discrepancies on the administration of means-tested benefit and were to be composed of a 6-members committee, a staff of around seven hundred people including its national system of appeals tribunals, advisory boards and payment offices (Miller, 1979, p. 333). The Act was implemented in early 1935 across two different dates: January for unemployed workers receiving transitional payments under the 1931 system and March for the able-bodied unemployed supported by local authorities (Garside, 1990, p. 74). The Act sought to remove local responsibility for transitional applicants entirely, to be conducted by national professional civil servants far from local political influences and pressures under uniformed guidelines. This new system affected hundreds of thousands of unemployed people who would see their benefits reduced and a much more intrusive means-test examination introduced (Ward, 2013, p. 165; Miller, 1979, p. 329). The unemployed were well aware of the new Act's impact long before its implementation because of the time and scrutiny of the bill to pass through parliament.

Nevertheless, the Act was far from achieving one of the central Government's aims: to remove the topic of unemployment from politics. The Government – especially the Treasury – expected to create a buffer to separate itself from the unemployed workers, to conduct unpopular measures without suffering the political consequences. However, it provoked the opposite (Ward, 2013, pp. 162-163; Garside, 1990, p. 74). The organised reaction of working-class organisations, including the NUWM, forced the Government to rectify its plans in the form of the operation of the newly created unemployment insurance machinery. To avoid further disruption, the Government decided to introduce a temporary standstill, that operated during 1935 and 1936 and provided the uninsured, unemployed workers – who were supposed to receive benefit under the new Unemployment Insurance Board – with either the UAB or the

local PAC, whichever was higher (Miller, 1979, p. 342, 346). For the Government, this class mobilisation represented the most severe legislative battle of the interwar years but preferred to delay its implementation before the arrival of crisis (Middlemas, 1979, p. 233).

By 1937 the Act was finally applied in its original terms. The Unemployment Assistance Board assumed responsibility of unemployed workers receiving transitional payments (unable to fulfil the requirements of the transitional payment's scheme). In early 1935, 44.1% of unemployed workers were aided by unemployment insurance, 32% by unemployment assistance and 8.8% by local aid. By 1939, 54% were under the first category, 30.1% under the second, and only 1.5% assisted by local authorities (Garside, 1990, p. 81). This demonstrates that the Government, in the end, managed to remove most of the administration of unemployment relief from the local authorities, hence diminishing the power of the NUWM's activists to influence local officials to provide more assistance and higher rates.

It is worth noting that during the demonstrations against the implementation of the Act, the TUC and Labour Party were careful to dissociate popular feelings from the activity of the NUWM and the CPGB. After the protest had ended, they preferred to obscure the victory of the working class against the Government's measurements, prioritising the version of institutional rather than mass protest victory to avoid strengthening the communist organisations. Any such outcome might risk their position as governing institutions (Middlemas, 1979, pp. 232-233).

5.5.- The role of the TUC

Due to the lack of a serious competitor within the labour and trade union movement during the 1930s, the TUC General Council maintained its leadership and imposed its authority on the movement and the Labour Party (Fraser, 1999, p. 177; Hinton, 1983, p. 148; Martin, 1980, p. 205). Despite the decline in membership and funding experienced by the trade unions since the

late 1920s, the employed workers' position and income were not affected since real wages had increased since the mid-1920s. The TUC's institutional position remained undiminished (Middlemas, 1979, p. 215). The trade unions' physical expansion came from the mid-1930s, together with the economic recovery. At the same time, the TUC strengthened its authority over trades councils, reducing them to channels of information and instructions. This harmed their regional power and forced them to break their links to the NUWM and the CPGB (Ibid, p. 221). After 1937, the TUC struggled to keep the Government's ear when it came to policymaking despite having enjoyed it for years (Ibid).

Walter Citrine, the General Secretary of the TUC, exerted great authority and dominated over the General Council during two decades from 1926, especially next to Ernest Bevin's leadership of the Transport and General Workers' Union. He was helped by Charles Dukes (General and Municipal Workers); George Hicks (Building Trade Workers); Arthur Pugh (Iron and Steel Trades Confederations); and John Marchbank (National Union of Railwaymen) (Clegg, 1994, p. 115). Citrine aimed to make the Trade Union Congress indispensable to the affiliated unions. This was achieved due to the administrative recourses that allowed the TUC to build a strong Research and Economic Department, with full-time and specialist staff members, who acquired expertise in representing the unions' interests, especially regarding industrial safety and workers' compensation (Martin, 1980, p. 219, 234).

The General Council managed to make the 1930s a decade of relative tranquillity. This can be exemplified by the fact that, after 1933, there was no national dispute for two decades. Despite continuous internal tensions in unions, the General Council rule and the amalgamations of the previous years facilitated a reduction in inter-union rivalry (Fraser, 1999, p. 177). The tensions were managed by strategies such as the bans of unions attempting to organise workers in a craft or industry where there was one already representing and negotiating on behalf of that sector's workers. Although this diminished individual workers' freedom, it gave more

collective influence, as it reduced the multiplication of bargaining agents (Pelling, 1966, p. 210).

The General Council's efforts to lobby the Government crystallised from the mid-1930s, notably because its collaboration in the construction of the war economy, specifically supporting the rearmament programme (Hinton, 1983, p. 150). The General Council focused its efforts on persuading government departments to introduce bills or adapt legislation favoured by the unions. Moreover, it aimed to influence the administration of legislation already passed (Clegg, 1994, p. 99). The main aspect of the relationship between the General Council and the Government was consultative. The Council soon acquired high advisory status in the planning of economic policy. It was given representation on the Economic Advisory Council, the Macmillan Committee on Finance and industry, the Colonial Development Advisory Committee, the Export Credits Advisory Committee, and the May Committee on National Expenditure. Additionally, union leaders accompanied the British delegations to the 1932 Imperial Economic Conference and to the 1933 World Monetary and Economic Conference (Martin, 1980, pp. 207-208). There was effective lobbying at different levels of officials' seniority, and there is no record of ministers refusing to meet union delegations throughout the 1930s. Trade union leaders managed to develop their consultative role with the Government and continue their critical approach to it, keeping the impression of moderation among their interlocutors (Ibid, p. 217). The General Council sponsored some 50 ministerial deputations between 1932 and 1937, where its officials could act at their discretion, without necessarily consulting the Congress (Martin, 1980, p. 234; Clegg, 1994, p. 112). The successful approach to the Government made the officials of the General Council develop their political and industrial credentials, representing general principles of the trade union and labour movement and aiming at long-term results, rather than the immediate affairs of the workshops (Martin, 1980, p. 236). For the Government, the TUC was its most important channel of

communication with the trade unions, a source of technical information and authority on the organised workers' views (Ibid, p. 239). This diminished the consultative role of the unions and of the Labour Party in favour of the General Council of the TUC, without any resistance from the unions, that confirmed the government officials that Walter Citrine and his inner circle represented a body fully capable of representing its constituents (Ibid, p. 266).

After its defeat in the 1931 General Election, the diminished power of the Labour Party was used by the TUC General Council to rebuild its political authority and dominate the party. The Labour Party remained weak during the early 1930s, predominantly a party of the older industrial areas and some poor parts of London (Hinton, 1983, p. 155). The TUC General Council managed to relaunch the National Joint Council of Labour (National Council of Labour from 1934), a consultative body representing the Parliamentary Labour Party, the National Executive of the party and the TUC, and to have a predominant part on it. It also managed to allocate trade unionists in Labour parliamentary seats (Hinton, 1983, p. 148). Through the Labour MPs, the General Council used the House of Commons as a public platform in support of unions claims and parliamentary committee rooms for detailed negotiations on government bills of union concern (Marin, 1980, p. 214). The party was excluded from the TUC-government dealings on industrial issues and on other matters had sometimes equal, some other less standing than the Congress (Ibid, p. 264). The General Council was strong enough in influencing Labour Party policy. Its strength did much to keep the party independent of Communist influence and refuse, repeatedly, the invitation to join the United Front.

Rearmament became the key drive of the position acquired by the TUC General Council during the late 1930s. Despite the Labour Party's commitment to a policy of collective security and with sympathisers refusing to accept a change in policy, the General Council supported the rearmament programme. It was encouraged by the opportunity to influence government through its newly achieved consultative role as it could benefit the engineering sector through

an increase in production. From 1935, Stanley Baldwin, again Prime Minister, announced that the days of non-interference of the Government in production issues were gone. Walter Citrine and Baldwin often met to discuss the rearmament policy (Martin, 1980, p. 209). Once the war began, during its first eight months, at least ten ministers and departments created consultative bodies with union representation or admitted the unions to existing organisations and, despite the resistance of Conservative ministers to formalise these relationships, the need for agreements and a close relationship with the labour side encouraged the Government to progressively institutionalise the unions' right to be consulted (Ibid, pp. 247-251). The General Council asked to have the same footing as employers; to have institutionalised access to Government through formal consultative bodies; to have no restrictions in the scope of affairs discussed; as well as for unions to have direct access to all government agencies handling matters of labour concern. During those eight months, the Government acknowledged these claims, though not completely (Ibid, p. 254). The Spanish Civil War and the need to fight fascism was the factor that made the Labour and trade union movement redirect its foreign policy towards rearmament.

Despite its sustained efforts for affiliation to the Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party, the NUWM was critical of both. During its Eighth National Congress, in April 1933, the TUC was criticised for its betrayal during the General Strike and its open opposition and attacks to the NUWM subsequently (MML WHBV3, *Draft Main Resolution for the Eighth National Congress of the NUWM*, Manchester, April 1933). The resolution accused the TUC of endeavouring to set up local organisations that would "enable it to avoid all mass action dangerous to capitalism and its Mondist relations with the capitalist class" (MML WHBV3, *Draft Main Resolution for the Eighth National Congress of the NUWM*, Manchester, April 1933). The NUWM National Administrative Council considered the General Council's call to demonstrate against the Means Test, a demonstration seeking to restore its influence and to

attack the NUWM, which was excluded from the request (Ibid). The resolution also referenced the General Council's effort from 1931 to create their local unemployed movements through the local Labour Parties and Trades Councils. Those, nonetheless, had clashed with the NUWM's leadership on the unemployed combined with rank-and-file support for the NUWM inside the local Trades Councils and Labour Parties, who refused to form any organisation that would split the ranks of the unemployed (Ibid). To counteract the General Council's splitting tactics, the NUWM encouraged its branches to organise in every locality and forge a united-front approach among those organisations' rank-and-file (Ibid). The NUWM recognised the casual work inside the trade unions until that date and emphasised the need for planning activities inside the branches, co-operatives, guilds, Labour Parties and Trades Councils, which should be carried out by NUWM members who were also members of such organisations (Ibid). The NUWM accused the TUC General Council, the National Labour Party, and the ILP leadership of helping the National Government by developing the scheme of unemployed associations (MML WHBV3, *Crimes Against the Unemployed*, 1933, pp. 2-3). Under that scheme, unemployed associations were organised locally, without contact between them. The NUWM denounced that that structure split the unemployed's forces and broke their solidarity, hampered national cooperation, and frustrated any militant move on their part by refusing them autonomy and denying them the right of taking any action on their own (Ibid, p. 4). Additionally, the unemployed workers' movement kept insisting on the TUC's policy of collaboration with the employing class through the joint committee with the employers' organisations, which in practice only meant helping the employers to impose their schemes of rationalisation that led to unemployment (MML WHBV3, *Crimes Against the Unemployed*, 1933, p. 8).

Publicly, the TUC's main reason to the trade unions and trades councils when these bodies asked for an explanation and advice regarding the possibility of building bridges with

the NUWM was that the unemployed workers' movement was a Communist organisation. The trades unions and trades councils were not the only bodies curious to know the reasons why the NUWM was banned and asked for advice about how to respond to invitations by the NUWM to work together. Moreover, there is evidence of constituency Labour Parties asking for advice from the Labour Party's General Secretary on this issue. In 1935, the Whitehaven Divisional Labour Party, asked Middleton, Labour Party's General Secretary, the reasons why the NUWM was a banned organisation (LHASC LP/JSM/UM/21i, *Correspondence between Archie Rowe, Workington Divisional Labour Party, to J. S, Middleton,* 18th February 1935). In charge of the Whitehaven Divisional Labour Party, Archie Rowe suggested Citrine answer to the local newspaper that published the letter of the NUWM. The General Secretary of the TUC responded that such an action would be "advertising this body and its local organisation too much" and advised Mr Rowe to do it himself, highlighting that it was ridiculous to suggest that the NUWM was not a communist organisation, "when the communists themselves have admitted connection to the movement" (LHASC LP/JSM/UM/21i, *Letter from Walter Citrine to Archie Rowe*, 20th February 1935).

At the same time the TUC was building a close relationship with the Conservative Government, seeking formal recognition while maintaining its political role partly through the Labour Party, it continued its hostile attitudes towards the NUWM. Archival evidence confirms that the NUWM continued seeking an alliance with the trade union and labour movement, as it had done since the early 1920s. This is shown in a letter sent by the NUWM to the TUC General Secretary in 1936, inviting the Congress to establish, together with the NUWM, a united Unemployed Movement under TUC control, to become part of the Trade union and labour movement (MRC MSS.292/165.6, *Letter from the NUWM to the General Secretary of the TUC*, 16th June 1936). These proposals were often coupled with a public denunciation of the TUC and the Labour Party's role against the working class, primarily affecting the

unemployed workers. The responses to the NUWM initiatives from both the Labour Party and the TUC were always negative. In 1936, the National Council of Labour, an organisation bridging the National Executive of the Labour Party, its parliamentary representatives and the TUC, discussed whether its members should sign a petition organised by the NUWM favouring the abolition of the Means Test. It concluded against advising members of the Trade Union and Labour Movement to associate themselves with "efforts promoted by organisations ancillary to the CPGB, and the general relationship of the political and industrial Movement to Communist activities at home and abroad" (MRC MSS.292/165.6, *Minutes of a meeting of the National Council of Labour*, 26th May 1936).

In response to trade unions asking for advice about how to respond to communications from the NUWM, the TUC reminded its associated bodies that the movement was proscribed by the General Council of the TUC and by the Labour Party "as one of the disruptive bodies associated with the Communist Movement" (MRC MSS.292/165.6, *Correspondence between Citrine and P. W. J. Kingdom, The Fire Bridges Union*, 21st July 1936), and pointing out that the Council had its own unemployed associations, operating under the auspices of the Trades Councils. There was, therefore, no reason to cooperate with the NUWM. In the answers to the trade unions, the TUC emphasised that the joint committee of the TUC and the NUWM had been dissolved because NUWM's representatives "took the opportunity of attacking the Trades Union and Labour Movement" (Ibid).

The NUWM sought to integrate and collaborate with the bodies under the TUC control. Wal Hannington repeatedly expressed in his speeches and writings that "we can never regard specific organisation of the unemployed as taking the place of the Trade Movement", because "we treat the organisation of the unemployed as a necessary part of the working-class machinery" (MRC MSS.292/165.6, *Letter to Mr Harris, TUC, from Hannington*, 15th May 1936). In the face of attacks from the TUC and individual unions, the NUWM leadership

reacted by appealing to their right of objection to clarifying the accusations. One common concern on the side of the trade unions regarding strengthening the unemployed workers' movement was that the employment of the unemployed or the improvement of the unemployment relief would harm employed workers' conditions. Every time someone from the official trade union movement argued this position, the NUWM needed to deny it. This remained throughout the 1930s. In 1935, Donovan, of the Transport and General Workers' Union, suggested that the NUWM's Hayle Branch informed some employers of their readiness to accept work on a lower wage than the unions were trying to enforce, an act that would suppose an undercutting of Trade Union rates and conditions (MRC MRC MSS.292/165.6, *Letter by W. Hannington to the TUC-GC,* 13th September 1935). In response, Hannington issued a letter to the General Council of the TUC defending the NUWM position. He refuted the accusation stating that there was no proof and pointed to the help provided by the NUWM to strikes in unions' disputes since the early 1920s, demanded by the constitution of the movement: "resist all attempts of the employing class to use the unemployed to lower working-class standards and to actively participate in defending workers engaged in industrial disputes" (Ibid). The NUWM pointed to cases in Aberdeen, Alloa, Cambuslang, and Alexandria, where they, far from boycotting the work done by the official trade unions, had intervened to persuade fishing and laundry workers to join the TGWU (MRC MSS.292/165.6, NUWM National Headquarters Committee Circular, 9th September 1935). Additionally, the NUWM enlisted cases in the last two years in which they had supported the struggles of the official trade unions, such as the South Wales Miners' Federation, the National Federation of Retail Newsagents, and the District Organised Electrical Trades Union (MRC MSS.292/165.6, *NUWM National Headquarters Committee Circular,* 9th September 1935). The NUWM mixed protests against mistaken accusations from the trade union movement with unity applications. That happened since the early stages of the history of the unemployed workers' movement and remained as an

ongoing proposal for its whole life. Some months before the last Hunger March took place, in 1936, the NUWM Administrative Council pursued the possibility of becoming part of the Trade Union and Labour Movement. The unemployed workers' movement suggested the TUC call for a National Conference of representatives from all unemployed organisations to build a National Movement under the TUC control (MRC MSS.292/165.6, *Letter from the NUWM to the General Secretary of the TUC*, 16th June 1936).

In December 1937, the NUWM issued a letter inviting all unions and councils to join its newly created body, the Unemployment Research and Advice Bureau. It offered responsible advice on legal cases relating to the unemployed, especially regarding the unemployed's rights and well-being. The bureau was an advanced version of the NUWM's legal department that provided help for the unemployed workers to bring their cases to the Court of Referees, Appeals Tribunals, National Health Insurance, Pensions, Public Assistance UAB Anomalies Regulations, among other public departments. The NUWM claimed that the bureau had already affiliated to it Trade Union Branches, local Unemployed Associations, and branches of the NUWM (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *The value of affiliation to the Unemployment Research and Advice Bureau*, 1st December 1937). The letter was distributed among the recipients in February 1938 and, a month later, the TUC General Council received a letter from Bevin, the T&GWU's General Secretary, warning about its distribution (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *Letter of the General Secretary of the Transport & General Workers Union to Walter Citrine*, 4th March 1938). It was no coincidence that it was the T&GWU that alerted the General Council about this situation. The union's chair was Ernest Bevin, the second most prominent leader of the TUC at the time, after Walter Citrine. He was particularly interested in the successful rule of the General Council across the labour sector and was ready to remove any obstacle to the TUC's dominance over the labour movement. Soon after, the TUC General Secretary issued a circular (no. 84) to the trade unions and trades councils stating that the Unemployment

Research and Advice Bureau was part of the NUWM. It insisted that the unemployed workers' movement was a CPGB's subsidiary that had "steadily fallen in numbers" and could not claim to represent the unemployed. The circular assured that the General Council machinery was enough to improve the day to day administrative procedures of the unemployed workers (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *TUC Circular no. 84*, 17th March 1938).

Some unions, like the National Union of Boot & Shoe Operatives and the Electrical Trades Union, responded that they would do as the TUC suggested and that its branches would be "advised to have nothing to do with the Bureau in question" (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *Letter from the National Union of Boot & Shoe Operatives to the TUC*, 18th March 1939). Some others, like the National Association of Operative Plasterers, and the Leicester Branch no. 2 of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, stated that they could deal with such difficulties themselves (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *The National Association of Operative Plasterers*, 18th March 1938), implying that they could handle their affairs and did not need the advice of the General Council. The Amalgamated Engineering Union defended the work done by the NUWM, and that the TUC attack upon it was a "heresy hunting" (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *Correspondence between the Amalgamated Engineering Union and the TUC*, April 1938).

The invitation to join the Unemployment Research and Advice Bureau reached organisations beyond Britain's borders, like the *Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen*, a Dutch social democratic trade union, that contacted the General Council to warn them about the NUWM's letter and asking for advice. The TUC responded that they should not accept the invitation because the bureau was linked to the NUWM, an off-shoot of the CPGB, not recognised by the Congress and banned across the United Kingdom (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *Letter from the TUC to the Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen*, 19th January 1939).

The TUC's persecution of anyone linked with the NUWM continued until the late 1930s. There were two cases in which the TUC's Organisation Department required an

explanation to the Trades Councils of Warrington and Hastings regarding members of these bodies linked to either the CPGB or the NUWM. In February 1939, The Organisation Department knew about an accusation of a member and, until recently, delegate of the no. 18 Branch, Warrington, National Union of General and Municipal Workers, Mr G. Green, for being a member of the CPGB (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *Letter from the Secretary of the Organisation Department to P. Martin, Warrington Trades Council*, 28th February 1939). The Organisation Department required an explanation from the Warrington Trades Council regarding the circumstances and asked whether there were more members or associates of the CPGB or linked to organisations like the NUWM in the council (Ibid). A month later, the TUC did the same with the Hastings Trades Council about a local branch linked to the NUWM (MRC MSS.292/777/9, *Letter of the Secretary of the Organisation Department*, TUC, to Sargeant, HTC, 7th March 1939). Both Trades councils responded that they had no links with the CPGB or any entity linked to it.

Despite all the attacks from the Trade Union Congress towards the NUWM, throughout the 1930s, Wal Hannington never stopped seeking an alliance to better the conditions for the unemployed. In February 1938, he received the TUC award for his services recruiting members for the Amalgamated Engineering Union. In his letter to thank Walter Citrine, Hannington seized the opportunity to propose that the General Secretary of the TUC have an informal talk to discuss the organisation of the unemployed (LHM CP/IND/HANN/09/09, *Letter from Hannington to Citrine*, 21st February 1938). Hannington drew attention to the case of Germany, where Hitler took advantage of growing unemployment to recruit many soldiers. He feared the British would do the same, representing a danger to the working-class movement. The gamble of the NUWM's national organiser was to unite the unemployed in one national organisation, under the TUC's auspices, responsible for directing the work (Ibid). He was aware of the difficulties of arranging such an informal meeting, but it was an excellent opportunity to

exchange opinions on this subject and to "overcome some of the prejudices which have grown up between us" (Ibid).

This section shows that the TUC's attitudes towards the NUWM and, consequently, the CPGB, had not changed during the second half of the 1930s. The economic situation improved after 1933 with the subsequent decline in unemployment, the start of the rearmament programme, and the change in the relationship TUC-Labour Party and the Government. However, this did not modify the official trade union's vision and labour movement towards the dissident and extra-parliamentary left. Marginalising an organisation representing the unemployed proved a difficult task for the TUC. It was difficult to suggest that it posed a threat to the working class, and the maximum it could claim against it was that it undermined the trade unions ability to restore jobs (Middlemas, 1979, p. 240).

After 1935, the TUC's weakened ability to openly criticise the Conservative administration following the Labour Party's removal from office did not force the General Council to reconsider the chance of clubbing together next to the NUWM and the CPGB. Instead, the body ruled by Walter Citrine focused its energies on dominating the Labour Party to influence the Conservative Government, developing increasingly conservative attitudes and keeping its distance from groups that could threaten its governing position.

5.6.- The shift of the Communist Party attitudes during the 1930s

It was only after Hitler acceded to power in Germany in 1933 that the Comintern, and hence the CPGB, changed the line, fearing the threat that Nazi Germany could pose to the Soviet Union (Dewar, 1976, pp. 102-103; Newton, 1969, p. 20; Pelling, 1966, p. 201; Campbell & McIlroy, 2018, p. 520). The war was not between classes but between democracy and fascism. This shift resulted in a halt to the hostile sectarian policy and an alliance with the social-democratic forces to build unity against fascism in the form of a United Front. The change in

line was visible in the CPGB's applications to join the Labour Party, the work on behalf the LP during the 1935 general election in which the CPGB only appointed candidates in two constituencies, and the abandonment of its attempts to maintain the NMM and the two Communist unions built some years before (Dewar, 1976, p. 108; Newton, 1969, p. 35; Pelling, 1966, p. 201). Despite the CPGB's efforts to affiliate to the Labour Party, the latter organisation always refused, arguing that it was founded and financed from abroad, and had adopted aims and methods alien to British Labour traditions (Newton, 1969, p. 36).

In March 1933, the CPGB suggested a joint meeting together with the Independent Labour Party, the Labour Party, and the Co-operative Party, but it was rejected by the Labour Party and the TUC (LHM CP/IND/POLL/14/03, *Letter from the Labour Party to the Secretary of the Communist Party*, 22nd March 1933; CP/IND/POLL/14/04, *Letter from Citrine to the Central Committee of the Communist Party*, 22nd March 1933). Rather than give up, the CPGB continued trying to persuade the TUC and Labour Party of uniting benefits. In early 1934, it sought an alliance again, claiming that the situation demanded further efforts to build up the united front of the working class to end Mondism and class-collaboration so that labour could defend from the attacks of the National Government and withdraw the Unemployment Bill (LHM CP/IND/POLL/14/04, *Letter from Pollitt to the Executive Council of the TUC*, 14th February 1934). Walter Citrine responded to the CPGB by arguing that the cooperation already existed between the TUC and the Labour Party through the National Joint Council, together with the Co-operative Movement. This, for Citrine, provided all the necessary representative authority required to express the unity of the whole Labour Movement. Therefore there was no useful purpose of collaborating with "an organisation which has constantly shown its hostility and opposition to the expressed policy and purpose of Trade Unionism" (LHM CP/IND/POLL/14/04, *Letter from Pollitt to the Executive Council of the TUC*, 14th February

1934). Citrine added that the General Council would not consider any further communication from the CPGB (Ibid).

In 1935, the CPGB began to define its position regarding fascism across Europe. Fascism was the enemy and infiltration into the trade unions was a strategy to protect and strengthen trade unionism. The CPGB issued a circular directed to all TUC affiliated unions claiming that fascism was the enemy aimed at destroying trade unions to impose their rule by terror and violence (MRC MSS.292/165.6, *CPGB circular to all Trade Unions affiliated to the TUC*, 12th September 1935). The CPGB justified their work inside the unions to "strengthen and build them up into powerful mass organisations of the working class, to improve their immediate conditions, and to help the workers forward to Socialism" (Ibid). The CPGB pointed to the fact that the TUC had awarded party members with the TUC Medal for recruiting for the trade unions demonstrated that the party was not intending to destroy, disrupt, or disorganise the trade unions – as some TUC leaders asserted – but to unionise all industries and strengthen the movement (Ibid).

Although the CPGB's shift aimed to work together within the existing structures of British trade unionism, it nevertheless continued its unofficial strike activity and forms of organisation which created a real tension inside the party because, for some, it appeared to be a contradiction (Newton, 1969, p. 37). For example, the CPGB continued its infiltration of the Labour Party, with members that affiliated to both parties and maintained dual membership taking advantage of areas of weak Labour organisation. Many were well known within the Labour Party and were its candidates in elections (Campbell & McIlroy, 2018, p. 517). The infiltrations aimed to influence Labour Party policy to affiliate to the Popular Front and strengthen the left-wing inside that party (Ibid, p. 522). The change in line brought an increase of membership to the CPGB and a strengthening of its position. Nevertheless, the CPGB, far from increasing its aid to the NUWM, took the opposite direction.

In contrast to the CPGB's attitudes in the late 1930s, the NUWM continued its fight on behalf of the unemployed based on its available resources. In 1935, there were mobilisations, from Rhondda to Pontypridd, where 60,000 unemployed and employed workers marched together. Example include in Merthyr Valley with the attendance of 40,000; a Hunger March in Glasgow with 3,000 unemployed workers; and several others (Hannington, 1940, p. 132). In London, a group of the unemployed "invaded" the House of Commons and induced a debate on the Unemployment Relief scheme's new regulations. In the debate, Labour and Liberal members of the Parliament, who had been unemployed, shared their stories (Ibid). The 1936 Hunger March was the last with a national character that headed to London. By 1938, Wal Hannington perceived that the impending war was dominating public opinion and that the unemployed were forgotten about, even by the press (Ibid, p. 221). The unemployed workers' movement decided to change its strategy and design a series of surprise and sudden actions with no previous call. Success depended on their ability to start action before the police found out to have the most impact on the public (Ibid, p. 222). During the last months of 1938, two hundred unemployed men discretely approached a traffic light in Oxford Street in London and lay down across the road. It took the police hours to remove them because they were caught in the traffic created by the demonstration. The action achieved the press's front-pages with headings in all newspapers (Ibid, p. 224).

Other actions included sending an appeal to King George VI asking to use the Royal prerogative to grant Christmas relief to the unemployed. They also hung a big banner from the top of the Monument to the Great Fire in London, with "For Happy New Year the Unemployed Must Not Starve in 1939" written in bold letters (Hannington, 1940, p. 229). These and other actions in London were the kinds of activities that the NUWM could develop on the eve of war and without the help of the CPGB.

In an interview in 1973, Harry McShane – leader of the NUWM in Scotland – revealed the CPGB's attitude to the NUWM and the movement's reaction. (MRC MSS.348/7/5/9, *Interview to Harry McShane*, 1973). On the one hand, the Party complained about the movement's lack of help for the communist cause and unwillingness to adapt to the party's line. The CPGB secretly used Sid Elias as a source of information regarding discussions of the movement's national administrative council. Moreover, during the 1930s, it sought to eliminate the movement through the creation of "broad committees" that would replace the NUWM. However, the attempt did not succeed (Ibid). On the other hand, the NUWM resisted becoming permanently subjugated to the party. It did this by opposing the class-against-class policy and the Popular Front because, in both cases, the party only wanted to benefit, to add to their prestige. It also proved its resistance to the party's control by appointing non-CPGB members, like Len Yule and Maud Brown (a member of the Labour Party), to positions of authority within the movement. During the NUWM council meetings, the party's concerns were often ignored because the priority was to address issues regarding how to lead the unemployed (Ibid).

However, despite the conflictual relationship between the CPGB and the NUWM, their campaigns shared similar demands. During the 1930s, especially during the second half of the decade, the CPGB and the NUWM were clear that fascism was the primary danger to the working class. Both bodies issued publications about how to defend against fascism. However, given the CPGB's inconsistent stance toward the National Government, we cannot claim that, in that topic, the CPGB and the NUWM always had similar views across the board.

In 1939, Wal Hannington issued a pamphlet warning about the dangers posed by fascism to the unemployed workers and denouncing the indifference and hostility of the Labour Party and the TUC's leaders towards the organisation of the unemployed. This left them in despair for their cause (WCML AG NUWM Box 2, *Fascist Danger and the Unemployed*, June 1939). In another pamphlet, Hannington denounced the scheme of labour camps, located in

remote parts of the country, where the unemployed were supposed to work for low wages and to train for conscription into the army. This, it was argued, isolated them from the working-class movement, encouraged fascist tendencies and prepared the ground for fascism in Britain by building camps in line with the Nazi model (MRC MSS.334/5/NW/2, *Beware! Slave camps and conscription*, March 1939).

In September 1939, Harry Pollitt and Palme Dutt contended that the war was imperialist, not anti-fascist (LPHM CP/IND/POLL/2/7, *Memorandum of the CPGB Central Committee*, 24th September 1939). While Pollitt encouraged the Labour leaders to take the initiative to form a new government, he also encouraged the communists to seek affiliation with the Labour Party. Palme Dutt and Idrix Cox criticised the Labour Party's campaign against the National Government and its selfish attitude of claiming the credit for every action they were involved in. They encouraged the CPGB's members to be critical of the Labour and Liberal parties' leadership as they sided with Chamberlain Government's attempts to get the working-class movement's support for an imperialist war and the policy of non-intervention in the Spanish Civil War, instead of uniting with the CPGB against fascism and war (LPHM CP/IND/POLL/2/7, *Britain and the Soviet Union*, 18th September 1939).

Conclusions

From the beginning of the National Government in August 1931 to the outbreak of war in 1939 saw a shift in the state's strategy to marginalise and exclude the dissenting extra-parliamentary left from the legitimate and valid spectrum of protest. The National Government opted to use violence against the NUWM and the CPGB, once the strategies of the 1920s proved unable to isolate them and deny them any political validity.

After the mutiny in Invergordon following the sudden reduction to sailor's salaries, the state sought to prove communist involvement in instigating discontent in the Navy. It proved

a failure. Nonetheless, the CPGB took advantage of the opportunity and tried to influence members of the armed forces to join their fight against the plight of employed and unemployed workers.

During the interwar period, state violence was used in the attacks against the members of the unemployed workers' movement in the early 1930s. The British state made – probably unlawful and illegitimate – use of the police powers and the courts to punish the activists who had been forced into isolation. Their rights to express their political views were negated. With flimsy evidence, the state prosecuted the leadership of the NUWM for questionable charges. Later, the National Government strengthened the criminal legislation to use even greater powers – expected only to be used during emergency periods – to eradicate protests that jeopardised the peace easily. This was intended to avoid crisis and reduce political tensions and class struggle.

The interwar British state also sought to marginalise the unemployed workers' movement through the machinery of unemployment relief, standardising and centralising its administration. In short, it was taken out of the hands of local authorities where NUWM's activists were able to apply pressure for more relief and higher rates. Although the Government had to accept a temporary defeat in 1935, it later managed to diminish the NUWM's local power and force them to appeal to the national Government where they had minimal influence.

The TUC, through the leadership of Bevin and Citrine in the General Council, saw its position strengthened during the 1930s. Although it did not manage to influence policymaking completely ostracise the NUWM, the TUC kept its place as a governing institution, dominated the labour and trade union movement and managed to isolate the radical and extra-parliamentary left. The TUC controlled trade unions, trades councils and the Labour Party. Although it struggled with internal disputes, especially regarding its hostile attitudes against

the unemployed workers' movement, it accomplished the task it had been given in the tripartite accord alongside the state and the employers.

The CPGB failed in its campaigns to infiltrate the Labour Party and trade union movement and to build a viable alternative through an alliance with social-democratic parties. The TUC managed to convince the parliamentary left that an alliance with the CPGB was incompatible with parliamentary socialism. The CPGB also failed in aiding the NUWM and left it to fight alone. After using the unemployed workers' movement as its central recruitment machinery during the late 1920s and early 1930s, it dropped the unemployed cause, seeking an alliance with social democratic parties that had refused before.

The NUWM survived the 1930s despite the violence exerted by the state, the hostility from the NUWM and the CPGB's attempts to co-opt it. It ended the 1930s, however, in isolation. It never stopped seeking a joint campaign with the labour and trade union movement on behalf of the unemployed. It was critical of the TUC, but offered to cooperate under the General Council's leadership. It participated in all the working class' campaigns throughout the decade, provided legal assistance to the unemployed workers so they found unemployment relief at the best possible rates, and wrote innumerable pamphlets to explain their cause, orientate the workless in the labyrinths of the unemployment relief scheme and to protest against the Government's attacks to the working class. Throughout the 1930s, the NUWM remained an important and undefeated movement.

Conclusions

The relevance of the NUWM

During the interwar years, the NUWM, in demanding the fulfilment of the needs of the unemployed workers, challenged the legitimacy, legal power and authority of the British state. The emergence of the unemployed workers' movement disrupted the tentative political stabilisation dependent on the capacity of capitalist states to meet the needs of the working class to contain class struggle. The state failed to meet the aspirations of a sector of the working class – the unemployed workers – who had never before organised as such to assert their right to employment or unemployment relief at appropriate rates.

While the Anti-Poor Law Movement in the 1830s, the Land and Labour League during the 1870s, and the agitations of the Social Democratic Federation between 1880 and 1914 had included the unemployed workers in their agitations and considered the levels, forms and control of unemployment relief as part of their concerns (Bagguley, 1991, pp. 72-84), it was not until the formation of the NUWM that an organisation *of* the unemployed – not only *for* the unemployed – emerged at a national scale. The NUWM furthered the expression of discontent and mobilisations of the Shop Steward Movement, which since the middle of World War I organised to challenge the trade union leadership's conservative and collaborative attitudes. Both movements challenged the state's strategies to divide and diminish the working class's organisational unity through organising dissident mobilisations reliant on direct action socialism that created a form of civil disorder that was very difficult to contain by the traditional combination of concessions and repression. The NUWM was a political organisation with exceptional characteristics that brought together aspects of trade unions, in terms of its organisational structure and values, and elements of social movements as far as they mobilise for collective action. The movement should be seen as an industrial, political movement because, remaining in the industrial field, it brought to the national political agenda a concern

of an exceptional dimension – mass and long-term unemployment – and provided a complex political and economic explanation of the causes of such situation, pointing not only at the deficient response from the state but also seeking to counteract the disdain of the labour and trade union movement towards the unemployed workers and to unite the working class.

Since the nineteenth century, the capitalist state in Britain developed a series of mechanisms to channel working-class aspirations: institutional forms of industrial relations, that had provided trade unions with constitutional rights, a system of social administration, that created and updated the public schemes of Poor Law relief and the Unemployment Insurance, and democratic franchise, that by 1918 guaranteed the right to vote for a great majority of the British population (Clarke, 1988, p. 144). Nevertheless, since the first years of the interwar period, during the aftermath of the war, the understanding between the productive forces and the state on behalf of the war efforts began to crumble due to the high levels of unemployment registered – partly as a consequence of the uncoordinated process of demobilisation that brought thousands of ex-servicemen to the streets without a job. The discontent with the high levels of unemployment and the lack of an adequate response from the state to guarantee job positions for those who had been at work before and during the war – and some of them who had fought in the front – joined the already existing discontent of the rank-and-file workers who had formed the Shop Stewards' Movement and who were progressively losing their jobs as a consequence for their militant resistance. For them, the state's institutional channels as a means to fulfil the aspirations of an important section of the working class – now unemployed – had fallen short and were insufficient to cover their needs. For the unemployed workers organised in the NUWM, thus, it was impossible to fulfil their needs with the limited relief provided by the system of unemployment insurance and it became impracticable to demand work or full maintenance through the labour and trade union machinery because such a demand

exceeded the limits imposed by the constitutional forms to a labour and trade union movement subordinated to the rule of capital.

This works explained how the forms of organisation and the ideological position of the NUWM became highly problematic for the state and the system of industrial relations: it was an organisation very hard to subordinate or annihilate. This relates to the research question that inquires why the NUWM attracted great attention and aversion from the state and the TUC. Beyond the difficulties of fulfilling the short-term demands of the NUWM – employment or full maintenance at trade union rates – it was impossible, even contradictory, to confine within the limits available to a capitalist state an organisation that targeted capitalism as the responsible force behind the increasing tendency of mass and long term unemployment. While the NUWM sought to incorporate to the formal machinery of trade unionism to pursuit a better treatment for the unemployed workers and proved to be open to dialogue with representative commissions of the state – a sign of willingness to request its demands within legal limits and the established formats of consultation – it never stopped denouncing capitalism together with the attitudes of the national governments and the trade union movement, clubbing together and ignoring the plight of the unemployed workers. The NUWM exposed the links of the leadership of the trade union movement with the state through periodic publications in the form of a newspaper – *Out of work,* later *The New Charter* – and pamphlets. For example, in *The Meaning of the Blanesburg Report*, the NUWM reproached the tendency through which the Conservative government co-opted members of the labour and trade union movement – in this case Frank Hodges (Secretary of the International Miners' Federation), Margaret Bondfield (member of the TUC General Council) and Albert Edward Holmes (Secretary of the National Printing and Kindred Trades Federation) – to be part of committees of enquiry that recommend attacks upon the working class – in the case of the Blanesburg Report, reductions in the rates of benefits for unemployed workers. In doing so, the leadership of the labour and trade union

movement facilitated the conservative government to claim that their measure had the support of a strong section of labour representatives (MML YD08/MEA, *The meaning of the Blanesburgh Report*, 1927, pp. 3-4).

The NUWM was a peculiar organisation. It was neither a trade union nor a traditional social movement. From trade unions, it took a bureaucratic structure and from social movements forms of resistance and mobilisation. This relates to the research question on the NUWM's strategies to counteract the state and the TUC responses. With an unstable and changing membership of some tens of thousands of members at any given time, the NUWM managed to mobilise hundreds of thousands and bring together over a million people during its concentrations and speeches at Hyde Park or other public squares across Britain to protest for the plight of the unemployed workers, call for the unity of the working class altogether as a class, and demand the responsibility of the state to provide employment or unemployment relief for the jobless. The type of mobilisation of the NUWM was revolutionary, spontaneous, rarely disciplined, and almost impossible to subjugate (Flanagan, 1991, p. 121). The NUWM resisted attacks from the state and the trade union machinery – led by the TUC – and the efforts of the Communist Party to co-opt it and recruit members from it. The NUWM's spontaneity and adaptability allowed it to innovate forms of resistance and mobilisation and to attract a great degree of attention depending on the situation. During the 1920s it opted to demonstrate outside Labour Exchanges and put pressure on the local administrations to get the higher rates possible for the unemployed workers. When unemployment reached its peak during early 1932, it organised the biggest hunger march to London and disrupted the National Labour Government to the point that its leadership was arrested and sentenced for causing sedition, disaffection among the members of the Metropolitan Police, disturbing the peace and order of the city, and inciting to resist the police. And after 1938, when unemployment had been relegated for other issues like rearmament and the coming war, the NUWM designed a series of performative acts

with some hundreds of unemployed workers in London's emblematic spaces attracted great attention and have a place in the front pages of newspapers. Thus, the features of the unemployed workers' movement allowed it to survive under a very hostile atmosphere, to remain highly visible, enjoy expressions of sympathy and support from society, sectors of the organised trade union movement and Labour representatives in Parliament during almost two decades during the interwar period.

The NUWM disrupted not only the limits of the capitalist state form, but also the constitutional limits through which the working class is confined to pursuit its aspirations, and the state's traditional governing strategies to contain disorder, it also challenged a corporate tendency developed in Britain from the second decade of the twentieth century between the state and representatives of labour and business' interests to guarantee social order and consent and avoid crisis as the highest priority.

The NUWM, through the astuteness of Wal Hannington, managed to bypass the attempts of the Red International of Labour Unions and the Communist Party to control and subordinated it altogether. The resistance of Hannington was tolerated to a certain extent because the NUWM remained an important source of membership for the party. The Communist Party concentrated its attention on the NUWM because it had demonstrated to be the strongest and most successful organisation sympathetic with communist ideology in mobilising hundreds of thousands of people. The party sought to control the movement and make of it a recruiting mechanism, which achieved to a great extent as it has been suggested by Campbell & McIlroy (2008), however it tolerated a degree of autonomy to the movement because it was necessary to count on it as a strategic ally. The NUWM did not seek further independence from the party because it was an important source of economic resources and essential support in the broadest sense. Both the NUWM and the party sympathised with each other and aided each other. The conflict between the two came from the limits to the party's

authority over the movement, motivated from Moscow more than from the national leadership of the party itself.

The role of the state and trade unionism

In approaching the role and limits of the capitalist state, this thesis explored the capacity for state action when facing industrial discontent product of mass and long term unemployment. To answer the research question that inquiries how the British state managed industrial discontent between 1921 and 1939, this work focused its attention on how the political form of the state adapts to face the challenges emerging in the circuit of productive capital, the sphere of transformation of capital where the physical means of production and labour power transform commodities into new commodities of greater value than their elements of production, and where the problems of industrial relations express (Burnham, 2006, p. 77). The capitalist state embodies and represents the general interest of the community, an abstract concept that refers to a divorced force from individuals and to which all are compelled to submit. The general interest, rather than the sum of all individual interest, appears as an external power, an alien interest imposed on individuals on whose behalf the state – with its social form – intervenes to mediate in the practical struggles of contradictory individual interests (Clarke, 1988, pp. 122-125). The idea of the general interest emerged from the creation of the modern – capitalist – state, determined by the separation of the state from civil society, where the former became responsible for formalising and enforcing the rule of money and the rule of law, while the latter was dissolved into independent individual, removing the political element of civil society as a whole (Ibid, pp. 126-127).

For the capitalist state, it is crucial to confine the political aspirations and activity of the working class within constitutional limits, in the form of individual and differentiated political rights – democratic franchise – separated from its collective aspirations, channelled through

trade unions legally recognised in the system of industrial relations and differentiated by trade to avoid a strengthening of the working class altogether (Clarke, 1988, p. 138). The working class is admitted to the constitution as individual citizens rather than together as a class (Ibid, p. 163). The permanent tension between the working class' resistance and attempts to pursue its collective class aspirations politically and the state's necessity to separate the industrial sphere from the political sphere brings periods of unrest that the state, to guarantee political stability, seeks to contain through a combination of concessions and repression (Ibid, p. 136). The state is permanently accommodating its strategies to the new forms that working-class organisation acquires, always seeking to channel the working class aspirations within the constitutional limits. Each new political form that the capitalist state develops to face class struggle's challenge can only be provisional because the changing and conflictual social relations of production are in a permanent transformation and call for updated governing strategies to contain it (Ibid, p. 142).

The British state arrived at the aftermath of World War I constrained by an increase of demands from the working class and limited resources at its disposal due to a period of overaccumulation of goods previous to the war. The system of industrial relations had proved unable – and unwilling – to include the demands of unemployed workers because the trade union leadership had been domesticated and were committed to the restrictions imposed to remain consultative bodies of the government. The social administration system was insufficient to provide unemployment relief to the increasing number of workers who could not find a job and remained jobless for longer periods. The political rights provided to the working class with the electoral reforms that culminated in the 1918 Representation of the People Act derived in the strengthening of the Labour Party, which became the institutional channel for the political participation of the working class, closely linked to the TUC, strictly separated from the collective industrial struggles. The development of a democratic via for the

individualised political participation of the workers, remained very limited a way to bring to the agenda sensitive topics that affected their class altogether because such a system was precisely designed to subordinate working class needs to the power of capital through the constitutional limits of the liberal state form (Clarke, 1988, p. 136).

The interwar British state had managed the trade union leadership's commitment to a collaborative relationship, containing the expression class conflict in exchange of regulated wages and secure employment for the unionised workers and the admission of labour representatives in the corridors of power (Ibid, p. 195). The new relationship between the British state and the trade unions included as well representatives of business' interests and was a tentative, reversible and fragile political tendency – corporate bias (Middlemas, 1979, p. 371). This accord involved the state and the trade union leadership – led by the TUC General Council – in a process whereby class conflict was diffused by attempting to bring together as many groups as possible in corporate structures that sought to harmonise divergent and clashing interests (Middlemas, 1979, p. 383). When dissident groups were too hostile and impossible to co-opt and integrate in the corporatist tripartite accord, the task became to exclude them fully from any collaboration with the official trade union movement and marginalise them to the point that their diminished power was not a challenge anymore to the power groups participating in government.

For the state and the TUC, the NUWM represented a group that, for its disruptive features, was not a candidate to integrate within the labour and trade union machinery and needed to be ostracised. On the one hand, the NUWM challenged the state's need to keep the working class's collective strength fragmented and separated from political activities. On the other hand, the unemployed workers' movement jeopardised the trade union leadership's integration in the collaborative relationship with the state. The labour's representatives also

feared that the admission of the unemployed workers' aspirations in the official trade union movement would attempt against employed workers' rights and status.

The attempt to organise the working class under an unofficial leadership alongside – and challenging – the official trade union representatives initiated in 1916 with the formation of the Shop Stewards Movement and strengthened with the formation of the NUWM in 1921 where coincided the former shop stewards' leaders and organisations of former servicemen out of job. This meant a double challenge, to the state and the trade union leadership. On the one hand, it evidenced the state's incapacity to confine the working class's collective organisations within the industrial relations framework and, even more delicate, to neutralise the power of collective organisation of former combatants recently demobilised. On the other hand, it showed the fallacy of the TUC's capacity to integrate all groups attempting to organise the working class. The state and the TUC responded with a dual attitude of disdain and resentment. The former, insolvent to offer unemployment insurance enough to cover all unemployed workers at adequate rates and with its authority challenged by the organisation of the unemployed, reacted in a hostile fashion, refusing to meet representatives of the NUWM and infiltrating the movement looking for an opportunity to claim the unlawfulness of its activities. The latter refused to integrate the organisation of the unemployed within the official trade union movement and sought to influence the union membership to keep the NUWM at a distance, claiming that such organisation attempted against the employed workers' status. In this way, this research responds to the question about the TUC attitudes towards the NUWM. Both the state and the TUC found in the link of the NUWM with the Communist Party the perfect excuse to attack the unemployed workers' movement. The Communist Party, handcuffed to foreign organisations mandated from Moscow, represented interests alien to Britain's general will, challenged the legal constitution of the state and sought to bring a violent revolution to eradicate capitalism.

To address the research question on the TUC role regarding its relationship to the state, this work focuses on the events following the 1926 General Strike. Although the 1926 General Strike seemed to mark a turning point in the relationship between the state and the trade unions, in just nine days most trade unions that joined the miners call to strike returned to work. The government, highly pressured by employers' associations, prepared the bill that would later pass as the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trades Unions Act. The 1927 Act broke the channels of financial transmission from trade unions to the Labour Party, declared unlawful general strikes, imposed severe restrictions on picketing and forbid civil servants to join general unions. In passing the act, the government reinforced the separation of the political aspirations of the working class – that should remain a task of the Labour Party in Parliament and representative groups recognised by the government as consultative bodies – from its collective activities – confined to the industrial sphere through the institutional channels of the system of industrial relations (Clarke, 1988, p. 201).

The tension that emerged between the state and the trade union movement from the 1926 General Strike and the approval of the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trade Unions Act was settled by the intervention of Alfred Mond, who suggested the development of cooperative talks between labour representatives organised in the TUC and business' associations gathered in the NCEO and FBI, to be facilitated by the state. Despite the limited progress achieved from the talks in terms of industrial progress, what the cooperative talks achieved was a revalorisation of the cooperative zeal between the state and the trade unions, which came to legitimise each other's role in ostracising the dissident, militant and revolutionary groups – the NUWM above all – that could not be integrated into the collaborative alliance.

The national government sought to remove all the channels through which the NUWM exerted pressure through local administrations. A particular concern for the government was that the NUWM was pressuring locally elected authorities, who could feel forced to provide

relief at higher rates to get re-elected, ignoring the rules provided by the national authorities and unbalancing the standardised system of unemployment relief and Poor Law relief. From October 1930, the Minister of Labour – despite acknowledging a lack of unlawful or abusive use of benefits by the unemployed claimants – instructed its local officials to refuse relief for claimants who had been part of a NUWM Hunger March because the marches had explicit political objectives. During the first half of the 1930s, the national government – justified in the discrepancies of the divorced responsibilities and fragmentation in the decisions of the unemployment insurance system – explored possibilities to centralise and depoliticise its administration. The creation of the Unemployment Assistance Board aimed at determining whether claimants were subject of receiving unemployment benefit and set new rules for conducting the insurance. It also established a Statutory Committee to remove discrepancies in how Public Assistance Committees administered means-tested benefits. This new system affected hundreds of thousands of unemployed workers, who saw their benefits reduced. The removal of most of the tasks in the administration of the unemployment relief from local authorities proved a challenge for the NUWM's capacity to negotiate officials and influence them to provide higher relief rates.

The TUC sought to isolate the NUWM by refusing to form a united front of the employed and the unemployed workers – beyond the short term and insignificant Joint Advisory Committee on Unemployment (1924-1927) – and by influencing the trade unions to abstain from collaborating with the unemployed workers' movement and, instead, create their own unemployed associations to aid their out of work membership. Nevertheless, not all the trade unions and trade councils adhered to the TUC's strategies against the NUWM. Many resisted to comply with a hostile attitude against an organisation with which they were happy to sympathise and collaborate. That proved the TUC's incapacity to represent its constitutions fully, obfuscate disagreements, harmonise clashing interests within the trade union movement,

and displace the NUWM from its domain. This failure reinforces the claims that any attempt to confine class struggle is only provisional because it is permanently finding new forms to overflow the institutionalised channels conceived for it.

When TUC action proved insufficient to diminish the strength and impact of the NUWM, the state intervened more vigorously to marginalise it. The mutiny in Invergordon in September 1931 – product of a cut to the navy salaries – proved the perfect opportunity for the government to claim that the Communist Party was behind the insurrection, use the scapegoat to allege the unlawfulness of communist activities and initiate judicial processes against its leadership, despite the investigations had removed all speculations of communist incitement. A year later, during the peak of unemployment and still immersed in the economic crisis, in the context of the most important hunger march organised by the NUWM, the government decided to act against the movement, arresting its leadership. Elias, Hannington, Mann and Llewellyn – leaders of the NUWM – together with other members of the Communist Party were prosecuted for offences like sedition, disturbance of the peace and order, disaffection among the members of the Metropolitan Police and members of the armed forces, and incitement to resist police action. Such arrests attracted attention in Parliament, where members of the Labour Party, like George Lansbury, protested against the government's action, claiming that the activities of the Communist Party and the NUWM were lawful. The state used its three branches in a controversial manner to stop the advance of the NUWM, presenting meaningless evidence – obtained through questionable practices – to prosecute its members, demonstrating a lack of commitment towards liberty and the rule of law (Ewing & Gearty, 2001). The National Labour government sought to reinforce its coercive capacities and managed to pass the 1934 Incitement to Disaffection Act to easily prosecute endeavours to seduce members of the armed forces from their duty of allegiance, including the possession of documents that could potentially be used to commit sedition. The bill's discussion divided Parliament, where Labour

MPs denounced that the bill was intended against the Communist Party and its associated organisations like the NUWM.

The action of the state against the NUWM – just like the TUC's – proved insufficient to annihilate the movement and instead attracted divergent opinions within the government, Parliament and the Judiciary that questioned the motives and methods to marginalise the unemployed workers' movement. The state's manoeuvres towards the NUWM exhibit the independent form that the state acquires, divorced from civil society, and the constraints imposed upon it by its capitalist form. This helps us better understand the limits of state capacity to contain industrial discontent and regulate class struggle, especially during crisis times.

Approach and contribution

This thesis approached the emergence of the NUWM and the responses of the state and the trade unions during interwar Britain by focusing on the potentially disruptive capacity of class struggle to overflow the institutional forms of conflict management and the capacity of statecraft to relieve distress and confine disorder during times of crisis. This analysis was framed by the theory on industrial relations and trade unionism provided by Richard Hyman and Open Marxist accounts on the state. These set of theories are primarily concerned with highlighting the conflictual aspect of the social relations of production, the structural material antagonism in work and market relations, and the tentative and provisional character of governing strategies through which state managers mediate in conflict.

This approach contributes to scholarship on the NUWM and on the capacity for state action, specifically regarding the management of discontent and the treatment of dissent. It does so by drawing on a clear and explicit theoretical position that identifies the form of the state and its role in society and industrial relations, and the role played by the institutional

forms of industrial relations in channelling working-class aspirations and containing discontent.

This work contributes empirically in various ways. It portrays the relevance of the NUWM in terms of its capacity to bring questions on unemployment and adequate relief for the unemployed to the national agenda and to challenge the institutional forms conceived for the expression of class conflict.

The thesis illustrates empirically how the interwar British state made use of its relationship with the TUC to marginalise the NUWM in exchange for concessions for the employed working class – which benefited from stability at work and increases in real wages – and the recognition of the TUC as a governing institution that provided it with consultative and administrative functions in a tripartite accord with the state and business' interests.

The thesis builds on the approach to corporate bias provided by Keith Middlemas (1979). It does this by acknowledging and illustrating the tentative and fragile code between the state together with business and labour associations to avoid conflict and to guarantee governability and social order. Furthermore, this work advances Middlemas's arguments by arguing that the state made use of its coercive apparatus, including the police, intelligence services, the Courts and new legislation, to marginalise the NUWM as part of a long-term tradition to spy and weaken communist organisations. This research is critical of Middlemas's approach in as much as it overestimates the TUC's capacity as a governing institution, overlooks the TUC's internal conflicts and, hence, underestimates the need for direct intervention of the state to marginalise the NUWM. While acknowledging the relevance of integrating business and labour interests into the governing process, it is important not to exaggerate their capacity for action and influence to avoid industrial conflict and guarantee social order.

Another significant contribution of this work is to contextualise the use of the state's coercive apparatus as part of a deep-rooted strategy that involved the use of the intelligence services – MI5 and Scotland Yard – and the police against communist activists since before World War I. This suggests that the violent reaction – especially in the early 1930s – against NUWM's members was not a sudden and improvised reaction motivated on a genuine concern about social disorder and peace disturbance but a longstanding coordinated strategy to monitor, infiltrate and harass communists organisations, despite their lawful activities, to impede their growth as power groups.

This thesis argues that the industrial talks during the second half of the 1920s represented an opportunity for the state and the trade union movement to avoid a breakdown in their corporate accord after the tense events in 1926-1927, and instead reinforce the cooperative zeal in industrial relations and legitimise each other's actions to ostracise the NUWM. Rather than focusing on the failure of the Mond-Turner Talks to further the understanding between the TUC, NCEO and FBI for a long-term scheme of debate for industrial progress, the emphasis must be put on Alfred Mond's capacity to visualise a mutually beneficial way out of the estrangement between the Conservative Government and the trade union movement that resulted from the 1926 General Strike and the approval of the 1927 Trades Disputes and Trades Unions Act.

Additionally, this thesis sheds light on the extent to which the Communist Party's attempts to control the NUWM shaped the form and strength of the movement to mobilise and influence the state and the trade union movement. Beyond the level of penetration and control exerted by the Communist Party upon the NUWM (see Campbell & McIlroy, 2008), it is clear that the capacity of action of the NUWM changed depending on the attention that the CPGB put on it. This is especially clear in two periods: 1927-1933 and 1933-1939. During the class-against-class period, the CPGB established a policy of opposition against all political groups

hostile to Moscow's communist line. The control exerted by the Communist Party towards the NUWM made it very difficult for the movement to approach the trade union movement, especially during the early 1930s. However, it also provided it with more economic resources to develop more impactful mobilisations. That period also saw the state exerting its most violent means to marginalise the NUWM. In contrast, in the period after 1933, the Communist Party started looking again to form a united front together with social democratic forces against fascism and eased its influence on the unemployed workers' movement. This situation gave the NUWM more flexibility and autonomy to approach the trade union movement and innovate its forms of action; however, it limited its availability of resources, which had a direct impact on its capacity to organise mass action.

Further research

In seeking to broaden the understanding of the relation of the state with industrial dissent during interwar Britain and scholarship on the NUWM, it would be important to explore more the dealings of the NUWM branches with local Labour Exchanges, to further the analysis on the degree of autonomy of the NUWM branches, and to advance the work of Alan Campbell and John McIlroy on the relations of the NUWM with the Communist Party and the National Minority Movement. Revising the functioning of the NUWM at local level, especially during the 1920s, when the movement operated as a federation of semi-independent local unemployed workers' organisations, would help us determine with more precision the degree of autonomy and flexibility of the NUWM branches and their capacity to influence the local administrations to provide with higher rates of unemployment relief. This would provide us with more details on the degree of fragmentation of the NUWM and the extent to which such fragmentation helped or not the movement in expanding and influencing local administrations and sections of trade unionism. In that sense, it would also be important to look at the relationship between

the local administrations and the officials of the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Health and the Treasury to determine the origin of the restlessness with the capacity of influence of the unemployed workers' movement over the local authorities.

On the other hand, a more precise analysis on the relationship of the NUWM with the Communist Party and the Minority Movement, especially before 1929, would clarify how the unemployed workers' movement forged its resistance from the party and its coexistence alongside the Minority Movement. This could be done by a focused analysis on the figure of Wal Hannington who, despite its importance in the party activities, unions' affairs, and the NUWM's leadership, has attracted limited interest from academic studies. Hannington's trajectory is linked to the Communist Party, the Minority Movement, the NUWM and the Amalgamated Engineering Union.

In light of contemporary patterns of economic crisis, unemployment, precarious work, and forms of resistance, it would also be important to develop further research on the capacity of statecraft to mediate in conflict during periods of crisis and how new forms of class struggle overcome new institutional channels to contain conflict and constrain the material and political aspirations of society. In revisiting the experiences of dissident organisations, it is crucial not to lose sight on the power asymmetry that divides these minority groups from the state and already existing groups of the organised society with official recognition and institutionalised channels of consultation. It is also essential to analyse the emergence of dissent and the reactions from different power groups as a dialectic of interactions, where all relevant actors are somehow interconnected and in conflict with each other. No phenomenon develops in isolation. The challenge is to find the associations between events and actors and their rationale. Future research must also pay attention to how political strategies are motivated by economic necessities, how state managers seek to respond to financial pressures, despite claims about the separation of the political from the economic. In a few words, we must empirically explain that

all economy is political economy and that governing is primarily intended at mediating in conflict and uncertainty bred by economic struggles.

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