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# Right-Wing Pressure Groups and the Anti-Union 'Movement' in Britain: Aims of Industry, Neoliberalism, and Industrial Relations Reform, 1942-1997

*Stephen Mustchin*

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In the second half of the twentieth century, right-wing pressure groups in Britain linked to corporate interests and the Conservative Party significantly contributed to ideological critiques framing trade unions as overly powerful and politicized, while engaging practically to influence policy, legislation, and wider anti-union activity. This article investigates these pressure groups, focusing on Aims of Industry, established in 1942 by industrialists with Conservative affiliations to oppose state intervention in the economy. Aims of Industry was significant but, apart from some early accounts of its public relations activity,<sup>1</sup> little has been published. From the 1970s Aims of Industry's focus shifted to industrial relations reform, militancy and 'subversion' in industry. A wide range of firms - notably the sugar monopoly, Tate & Lyle, and from engineering, construction, food, and tobacco - made donations. The influence of its public relations activity is questionable, given that state ownership, economic regulation, and trade-union presence all increased during 1945-79 when it was most active. It did play a pivotal role in connecting right-wing pressure groups such as the Economic League, National Association for Freedom (NAFF), Institute for the Study of Conflict (ISC), Industrial Research and Information Services (IRIS), and The Movement for True Industrial Democracy (TRUEMID), as

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1 R. Kisch, *The Private Life of Public Relations* (MacGibbon and Kee: 1964); H. H. Wilson, 'Techniques of Pressure: Anti-Nationalization Propaganda in Britain', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 15:2 (1951), pp. 225-42.

well as influential bodies such as the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) and the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS).

It has been argued that this network of right-wing organizations, which sought the end of Keynesian-influenced policy in favour of neoliberalism, declined in importance during the 1980s, when their aims were largely implemented by Conservative governments. But they have a wider importance, underemphasized in the literature. It is essential, first, to assess their work in order to understand why post-1979 public policy developed in the way it did, especially given their enduring influence on Conservative government policies since 2010. Second, to demonstrate some of the complexities and nuances of neoliberalism and anti-union politics, which ranged from the promotion of human relations and unitary industrial relations, through to more strident Cold War influenced attacks on industrial 'subversion'. A further issue is that some right-wing union officials and Labour Party figures were drawn into such networks to try to suppress sections of the left within their own organizations. Finally, these bodies' practical role is apparent over the treatment of many trade-unionists (characterized as 'subversives') by blacklisting agencies and the state.

Debates on Thatcherism which stress ideological hegemony<sup>2</sup> or institutional change<sup>3</sup> arguably underemphasize the impact of such changes on workers. Claims that the labour movement 'lost the argument' on industrial relations reform frame these as a battle of ideas.<sup>4</sup> Some historiography of Thatcherism has questioned the influence of policy institutes (so-called 'think tanks') and pressure groups on Conservative government policy, especially after 1979.<sup>5</sup> Yet this minimizes the material influence of some significant organizations with considerable propaganda and lobbying capacity and influence within the institutions of organized business. It also ignores associated groups which addressed 'subversion' through blacklisting, victimization, and influencing the internal politics of particular unions.

The first section of the article discusses the wider ecosystem of right-wing pressure groups and policy institutes in the post-war period to establish their linkages and the pivotal role of Aims of Industry. Three key periods in its history are analysed: the late 1940s and campaigns against

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2 S. Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (Verso: 1988).

3 B. Jessop, K. Bonnett, S. Bromley, and T. Ling, *Thatcherism: A Tale of Two Nations* (Polity, Cambridge: 1988).

4 C. Cradden, *Neoliberal Industrial Relations Policy in the UK: How the Labour Movement Lost the Argument* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke: 2014).

5 R. Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain: The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era* (Simon and Schuster: 2013); A. Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking and the Birth of Thatcherism, 1964-1979* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke: 2016).

Labour government reforms; the 1970s, when its focus was increasingly on unions and domestic subversion; and the 1980s, when its long-standing objectives were largely enacted through government industrial relations and economic policy. The concluding section focuses on themes of social power and influence, the development of neoliberalism, differing currents within the neoliberal ‘movement’, its relationship with organized business, Conservative ideology and policy, and the implications for unions and industrial relations. While Aims of Industry and associated groups declined in significance, their ideological apparatus, organizational networks and strategies nonetheless influenced government economic and labour market policy.

### Right-wing networks in post-war Britain

Pressure groups seeking ‘to combat socialism and collectivism’ and concerned with taxation, state education, and local government date from the late nineteenth century. The Liberty and Property Defence League (founded in 1882), the British Constitution Association (1905), and the Anti-Socialist Union (1908) were prominent in opposing the emerging Labour movement. The Anti-Socialist Union was closely linked to the Conservative Party, and transferred its ‘financial and literary assets’ to the Economic League in 1949.<sup>6</sup> The latter had been founded in 1919 as National Propaganda, changing to the Economic League in 1926, the most significant of many bodies formed in response to the rise of the Labour Party, revolutions in Continental Europe, Bolshevism and the surge of industrial militancy.<sup>7</sup> Led by Sir Reginald ‘Blinker’ Hall, former Director of Naval Intelligence at the Admiralty,<sup>8</sup> the Economic League brought together leaders of the mining, engineering, and shipping employers’ associations ‘to create an anti-subversive organization as part of a broader “crusade for capitalism”’.<sup>9</sup> This involved propagandizing at factory gates and countering left-wing organizations: the 1926 General Strike saw it provide

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6 K. Brown, ‘The Anti-Socialist Union, 1908-49’, in *idem* (ed.), *Essays in Anti-Labour History: Responses to the Rise of Labour in Britain* (Macmillan: 1974), pp. 234-61, at p. 257; J. Peters, ‘Anti-Socialism in British Politics c. 1900-22: The Emergence of a Counter-Ideology’ (Ph.D., Oxford University: 1992), p. 7.

7 A. McIvor, ‘A Crusade for Capitalism: The Economic League, 1919-1939’, *Journal of Contemporary History (JCH)* 23:4 (1988), pp. 631-55, at p. 633;

M. Hughes, *Spies at Work* (self-published: 2012), pp. 13-15.

8 Hall later worked in Conservative Central Office and was associated with the Zinoviev letter affair: R. Jeffreys-Jones, *In Spies We Trust: The Story of Western Intelligence* (Oxford University Press: 2013), pp. 38-9.

9 McIvor, ‘A Crusade for Capitalism’, *JCH*, p. 634.

strike-breakers,<sup>10</sup> and during the Hunger Marches it created ‘flying squads’ with ‘propaganda vans’, with speakers and leafletters visiting towns and villages ahead of the marchers denouncing them as ‘a communist plot to cause civil disorder’.<sup>11</sup> Such campaigns were largely unsuccessful, leading to other strategies, notably blacklisting, to maintain some influence and make an impact beyond ideology and propaganda.<sup>12</sup>

Such organizations grew in prominence and became increasingly interlinked. The 1945-51 Labour governments’ expansion of the welfare state and nationalization of key industries were enduring, with the 1951 Conservative government, aside from denationalizing steel and road haulage, doing little to reverse such reforms. In the late 1950s calls for greater market liberalism, a reduced economic role for the state, constraints on trade unions (as set out in *A Giant’s Strength*),<sup>13</sup> and criticisms of universal social services grew louder. Such concerns became associated with the right of the Conservative Party, notably Enoch Powell.<sup>14</sup> With the onset in 1948 of the Cold War and growing US influence in Europe, unitary industrial relations that minimized adversarial management-union relationships and focused on productivity were one feature of American interventions.<sup>15</sup> The US also sought to divide national labour movements in Europe, prevent alliances between union movements in Western Europe and the Soviet sphere of influence, and weaken unions with Communist affiliations and members, ‘bringing the Cold War into the heart of trade union practice’.<sup>16</sup> This was augmented with a well-resourced programme of ‘cultural propaganda’ seeking to ‘nudge the intelligentsia of western Europe away from its lingering fascination with Marxism and Communism’.<sup>17</sup>

Under Labour, the Foreign Office in 1948 established the Information Research Department (IRD), which collected information on communism

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10 *Ibid.*, p. 644.

11 Hughes, *Spies at Work*, pp. 101-6.

12 C. Miller, ‘Extraordinary Gentlemen: The Economic League, Business Networks, and Organised Labour in War Planning and Rearmament’, *Scottish Labour History Review* 52 (2017), pp. 120-51.

13 Inns of Court Conservative and Unionist Society, *A Giant’s Strength: Some Thoughts on the Constitutional and the Legal Position of Trade Unions in England* (Inns of Court Conservative and Unionist Society and Christopher Johnson Publishers: 1958).

14 E. H. H. Green, *Ideologies of Conservatism: Conservative Political Ideas in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford University Press: 2002), pp. 222-3.

15 A. Carew, *Labour under the Marshall Plan: The Politics of Productivity and the Marketing of Management Science* (Manchester University Press: 1987).

16 *Idem*, *American Labour’s Cold War Abroad: From Deep Freeze to Détente, 1945-1970* (Athabasca University Press, Edmonton: 2018), p. 3.

17 F. Stonor Saunders, *Who Paid the Piper?: The CIA and the Cultural Cold War* (Granta: 1999), p. 1.

and communists and provided anti-communist propaganda for use within foreign policy;<sup>18</sup> but there were early concerns over the lack of a 'non-official' anti-communist body.<sup>19</sup> In 1951, Common Cause was launched by barristers Neil Elles and Peter Crane, and former Independent Labour Party chair, C. A. Smith. Its initial advisory council included long-standing members of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) general council, Florence Hancock and Tom O'Brien; former Iron and Steel Trades Confederation general secretary, John Brown; former union official and Labour peer, Charles Ammon; Scottish Conservative and Unionist MP, Lord Malcolm, Douglas-Hamilton, former MP, the Duchess of Atholl; and a retired Chief of the Defence Staff, Admiral Andrew Cunningham.<sup>20</sup> Producing pamphlets denouncing British Communists as 'rats' and 'Muscovites',<sup>21</sup> the increasingly extreme and militaristic Common Cause led to a split in 1956 and the formation of IRIS.

IRIS is thought to have received funding from IRD and there is speculation that it may have received covert Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) sponsorship.<sup>22</sup> It was initially chaired by Jack Tanner, former president of the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) (1939-53) and the TUC (1952-53).<sup>23</sup> Anti-communists in the union movement, including in the AEU and the Electrical Trades Union (ETU) such as Les Cannon and Frank Chapple, who had both left the Communist Party in 1956, were cultivated by these networks.<sup>24</sup> Right-wing trade-unionists were significant

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18 H. Wilford, *Calling the Tune? The CIA, the British Left and the Cold War, 1945-60* (Cass: 2003), p. 50; L. Smith, 'Covert British Propaganda: The Information Research Department, 1947-77', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies (JIS)* 9:1 (1980), pp. 67-83; P. Lashmar and J. Oliver, *Britain's Secret Propaganda War, 1948-1977* (Sutton Publishing, Stroud: 1998).

19 Smith, 'Covert British Propaganda', *JIS*, p. 68.

20 *Ibid.*; 'Spig', *Against Democracy: The True Story of the Economic League* (1 in 12 Publications, Bradford: 1988), p. 62; R. Ramsay, *The Clandestine Caucasus: Anti-Socialist Campaigns and Operations in the British Labour Movement since the War* (Lobster Special Issue, Hull: 1996).

21 Wilford, *Calling the Tune?*, p. 69.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 70.

23 Tanner, a founder member, left the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1948 after the coup in Czechoslovakia and became a committed anti-communist: A. Campbell, N. Fishman, and J. McIlroy, 'The Post-War Compromise: Mapping Industrial Politics', in *idem* (eds), *The Post-War Compromise: British Trade Unions and Industrial Politics 1945-64* (Merlin, Monmouth: 2007), pp. 69-116, at p. 83.

24 G. Stevenson, 'The ETU: Light or Liberty Half a Century On: The 1961 Ballot-Rigging Case Reconsidered', [http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1520&Itemid=136](http://www.grahamstevenson.me.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1520&Itemid=136) (accessed 8 November 2018); R. Bean, 'Militancy, Policy Formation and

in framing such groups as pluralist in that they engaged figures from the labour movement as well as business, the military, journalism and politics. IRIS monitored and challenged communists within the union movement, for example in the 1966 seamen's strike and during the 1980s in the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunications and Plumbing Union (EETPU), and National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), receiving financial support from the private sector and the intelligence budget.<sup>25</sup> The effectiveness of such interventions is difficult to measure, but the work of Common Cause and IRIS led to significant backlashes from non-communists suspicious of such outside interference.<sup>26</sup>

Another organization, the ISC, was founded in 1970 by Brian Crozier, an Australian journalist with links to the CIA, the IRD, and British intelligence services.<sup>27</sup> Crozier lectured army officers on the risks of a Marxist-Leninist takeover of the Labour Party in the 1970s<sup>28</sup> and produced publications, often based on Aims of Industry material, attacking industrial militancy and subversion.<sup>29</sup> Central to funding these networks were British United Industrialists (BUI), and similar bodies such as the Industrial Trust, Midlands Industrialists Advisory Council (MIAC), and Northern Industrial Protection Association.<sup>30</sup> These secretive organizations received donations from companies and distributed funds to Aims of Industry, the IEA, the CPS, Adam Smith Institute (ASI), and the Social Affairs Unit.<sup>31</sup> Key

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Membership Opposition in the Electrical Trades Union, 1945-1961', *Political Quarterly* 36:2 (1965), pp. 181-90.

- 25 P. Foot, 'The Seamen's Struggle', in R. Blackburn and A. Cockburn (eds), *The Incompatibles: Trade Union Militancy and the Consensus* (Penguin, Harmondsworth: 1967), pp. 169-209; *Lobster* 19 (1990), p. 25; D. Osler, 'Inside the Moderates' CPSA Rank & File supplement (1995), <http://www.labournet.net/ukunion/0207/pcs6.html> (accessed 13 November 2018).
- 26 R. Stevens, 'Cold War Politics: Communism and Anti-Communism in the Trade Unions', in Campbell *et al.* (eds), *The Post-War Compromise*, pp. 168-91, at p. 171.
- 27 J. H. Michaels, 'The Heyday of Britain's Cold War Think Tank: Brian Crozier and the Institute for the Study of Conflict, 1970-79', in L. van Dongen, S. Roulin, and G. Scott-Smith (eds), *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke: 2014), pp. 146-60.
- 28 *Guardian*, 9 August 2012.
- 29 D. Miller, 'How Neoliberalism Got Where It Is: Elite Planning, Corporate Lobbying and the Release of the Free Market', in K. Birch and V. Mykhnenko (eds), *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism: The Collapse of an Economic Order* (Zed: 2003), pp. 23-42.
- 30 *Observer*, 19 October 1969.
- 31 R. Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable: Think-Tanks and the Economic Counter-Revolution 1931-1983* (HarperCollins: 1995); B. Jackson, 'The Think-Tank Archipelago: Thatcherism and Neo-Liberalism', in B. Jackson

figures in these networks ‘came directly from the circles nurtured by Mont Pelerin’,<sup>32</sup> the ‘neoliberal thought collective’ central to the intellectual and policy agenda of neoliberalism.<sup>33</sup> There was a crossover between individuals associated with these bodies, especially Aims of Industry and the CPS, and in 1977 meetings took place between Keith Joseph MP and senior figures within the Economic League about working together.<sup>34</sup> Discussions within the CPS showed an awareness that more rigorous ‘studies’ than simplistic pro-free-market outputs were needed or they could be ‘written off as another Aims of Industry ... whose reputation now minimises the impact of the many good publications they produce’.<sup>35</sup>

Aims of Industry was a central actor in this proliferation of right-wing pressure groups and policy institutes, sharing broadly similar political outlooks, funding from similar sources, and maintaining close links with the Conservative Party. Table 1 outlines the most significant of these groups and maps out some of their connections.

### **Aims of Industry: early campaigns and the post-war ‘consensus’**

The agenda of the first meeting of Aims of Industry reflected its concerns regarding state control over industry, increases in taxation on profits after the war, the expansion of the welfare state, and ‘the political trend towards collectivism’.<sup>36</sup> Other groups with related objectives emerged at the time, for example the libertarian Society for Individual Freedom (established in 1944), campaigning against the state’s role in the economy and society,<sup>37</sup> but Aims had greater resources and stronger connections with organized business and the Conservative Party. Early supporters included Garfield

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and R. Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher’s Britain* (Cambridge University Press: 2012), pp. 43-61; R. Desai, ‘Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony’, *New Left Review* 203 (1994), pp. 27-64, at p. 27.

32 Miller, ‘How Neoliberalism Got Where It Is’, p. 29.

33 P. Mirowski and D. Plehwe (eds), *The Road from Mont Pèlerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective* (Harvard University Press: 2009).

34 1977 Feb 22 Tu, Archive (Sherman MSS), Centre for Policy Studies Management Committee minutes (meeting) [publications, CCO, Galbraith]: Box 13, Sherman MSS, Royal Holloway Library.

35 Sherman memorandum to CPS colleagues (Credo) [‘we should be better off without a credo’] 74 Nov 18 Mo; Archive (Sherman MSS): Box 7, Sherman MSS, Royal Holloway Library.

36 Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp. 72-3.

37 J. Stapleton, ‘Resisting the Centre at the Extremes: “English” Liberalism in the Political Thought of Interwar Britain’, *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 1:3 (1999), pp. 270-92.



Table 1: Right-wing pressure groups and Aims of Industry

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Founded</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Links to Aims of Industry</i>
Economic League	1919	Pro-capitalist and anti-socialist propaganda, blacklisting.	Many donors funded Aims of Industry and Economic League. Henry Saxon Tate - former chairman, Tate & Lyle. Lord Taylor (Taylor Woodrow) - associate of Aims of Industry. John Dettmer, former director, award from Aims of Industry. CBI support.
Information Research Department (IRD)	1948	Anti-communist propaganda in both domestic and international spheres.	Support for IRIS. Brian Crozier a former associate. Last director - Ray Whitney, later Conservative MP, on ISC council in 1980s.
Common Cause	1951	Blacklisting, covert support for anti-communist trade-unionists.	Split in 1956, formation of IRIS. Rank Hovis McDougall, Hawker Siddeley and GKN provided funding (also to Aims and Economic League). CBI support.
Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA)	1955	Policy institute: reports, media briefings, input into legislation, advisers to Conservative Party.	Funding - BUI. Joint publications, e.g. Harris/Aims of Industry, <i>Myths on Unemployment</i> . Frank Chapple - Aims of Industry and IEA links.
Industrial Research and Information Services (IRIS)	1956	Split from Common Cause, some support from intelligence services, support for anti-communist union officials.	Funding received from Industrial Trust (trustees included Lord McAlpine, affiliated to Aims of Industry). Links to groups on right within engineering unions, later relationship between Frank Chapple and Aims of Industry. CBI support.

Institute for the Study of Conflict (ISC)	1970	Exposing 'subversives', publications on domestic subversion and left-wing groups, lectures for police and military officers.	Brian Crozier - involvement in NAFF along with Ivens. Pamphlets drew heavily on Aims of Industry material. Aims of Industry promotion of ISC publications. CBI support.
Centre for Policy Studies (CPS)	1974	Policy institute: reports, media briefings, input into legislation, advisers to Conservative Party.	Funding - BUI. Nigel Vinson wrote pamphlets for both CPS and Aims of Industry. Alfred Sherman - wrote pamphlets for Aims of Industry.
National Association for Freedom (NAFF)	1975	Pro-free-market propaganda, strike-breaking, funding legal actions.	Michael Ivens and Brian Crozier as founder members. Robert Moss, founding member, previously wrote for ISC. Stephen Eyres - wrote for Aims, edited NAFF's newspaper <i>The Free Nation</i> .
GB75/TRUEMID	1975	GB75 - threat to raise paramilitary force in case of general strike. TRUEMID - support for right-wing union officials.	Ivens claimed to have recruited trade-unionists to TRUEMID. Ivens's contact with David Stirling. Aims of Industry pamphlets warning of potential need for military intervention.
Argonauts	1981	Group of right-wing intellectuals and activists that lobbied for stronger regulation of unions and industrial relations.	Michael Ivens a member. Alfred Sherman, John Hoskyns members (together in 'Stepping Stones' group).
David Hart	1984	Operations during the 1984-85 miners' strike. Campaigning against Labour in 1987 election. Opposition to anti-apartheid groups.	Industrial Trust - funded Hart-edited <i>British Briefing</i> when taken over from Crozier. Hart first met Thatcher at CPS event. Campaign for a Free Britain (1987) - shared postal address with Aims of Industry.

Weston (head of Associated British Foods and a Conservative MP); J. Arthur Rank and his business partner, Sidney Askew; Sir Felix Pole of Associated Electrical Industries; the journalist Collin Brooks; and Lord Perry of Ford UK.<sup>38</sup> The first director was Hubert Starley, a motor industry executive who had worked in Whitehall as personal assistant to Lord Beaverbrook when Minister of Supply during the Second World War.<sup>39</sup>

The Aims of Industry council is revealing for the business and political interests represented. Starley remained on the council in the early 1970s, along with its chairman John Reiss (chairman of Blue Circle Cement), George Harriman (chairman of British Motor Corporation), and Nigel Vinson (a key figure in the IEA and the founding of the CPS).<sup>40</sup> In the 1980s council members included Lawrence Orchard (on the Economic League central council, 1975-77), Colonel W. H. Whitbread (active in early 1960s Aims of Industry campaigns against Scottish hydroelectric power generation which ‘threatened his estate’<sup>41</sup>), Kenneth McAlpine (of the construction dynasty), Justin Kornberg (on the Freedom Association council), Michael Forsyth (Conservative MP), Nigel Mobbs (chairman of Slough Estates), and Jamie Borwick (Conservative hereditary peer and chairman of Manganese Bronze Holdings).<sup>42</sup> Tracing the funding received by Aims of Industry is difficult: some income was channelled, together with that of other pressure groups and the Conservative Party, through bodies such as the BUI and MIAC, which carefully hid the source of their funds. Significantly, larger, internationalized firms were less likely to donate to such organizations although their executives were often board members of various pressure groups.<sup>43</sup>

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38 The career of Colonel Maurice Buckmaster, who had worked for Perry in the 1930s, on propaganda within the Special Operations Executive during the war, and later became director of public relations for Ford and president of the Institute for Public Relations, demonstrates some of the intersections between the security services, propaganda functions, business and the incipient public relations industry: J. L’Etang, ‘State Propaganda and Bureaucratic Intelligence: The Creation of Public Relations in 20th Century Britain’, *Public Relations Review* 24:4 (1998), pp. 413-41.

39 Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, pp. 72-3.

40 F. Broadway, *Power on the Shopfloor: Co-operation, Control or Chaos?* (Aims of Industry: 1972).

41 J. Miller, *The Dam Builders: Power from the Glens* (Birlinn, Edinburgh: 2002), p. 130.

42 ‘Spig’, *Against Democracy*, p. 62. Jamie Borwick is married to Victoria Borwick, Conservative MP for Kensington 2015-17 and London deputy mayor under Boris Johnson. Their son Thomas was a key figure in the Vote Leave campaign and worked as a consultant to Cambridge Analytica, implicated in the Brexit referendum campaign and the election of Donald Trump: *Guardian*, 7 May 2017.

43 *Observer*, 19 October 1969.

Cultivating close links with the Conservative Party, Aims of Industry criticized economic planning as ‘a popular euphemism for State Socialism, for Totalitarianism’.<sup>44</sup> Proposals for union involvement in management were derided and a self-pitying tone is evident, with Aims of Industry authors complaining that their proposals would lead to accusations that they were ‘Brutal Industrialist[s]’ or ‘Sadistic Plutocrats’.<sup>45</sup> Aims of Industry was prominent in opposing the 1945 Labour government and nationalization,<sup>46</sup> such as rail in 1947.<sup>47</sup> A 1948 circular from the Federation of British Industries invited its members to contribute to the Economic League and Aims of Industry, which had at this stage a clear division of labour. The former served as an industrial public relations organization, whereas the latter was concerned with ‘propaganda and spoiling work on the shop floor and in the executive dining rooms’.<sup>48</sup> By the early 1950s, Aims of Industry was estimated to have a budget of around £120,000 per year (equivalent to £3.2 million in 2018) to promote the achievements of ‘free enterprise’ and combat ‘unofficial strikes and the Communist menace in Industry’.<sup>49</sup> It advised the British Medical Association (BMA) in its campaign against the creation of the National Health Service (NHS),<sup>50</sup> but its most high-profile intervention concerned sugar.

A Labour Party policy statement in 1949, effectively a draft election manifesto, had called for nationalization of sugar refining and of industrial and life assurance.<sup>51</sup> The campaign against sugar nationalization involved newspaper advertising, leafletting, and distributing flyers within ration books all featuring the cartoon character Mr Cube parroting slogans such as ‘Tate not State!’ The broadcaster Richard Dimbleby interviewed ‘contented’ workers in Tate & Lyle refineries, disseminated in a film and four million twelve-inch records, with Mr Cube becoming ‘a symbol of political embarrassment and electoral setback’ for the Labour Party.<sup>52</sup> Within its British workplaces, Tate & Lyle organized family events and social clubs providing entertainment;<sup>53</sup> this dualism between paternalist management and the more authoritarian outlook evident in Aims publications was not

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44 Aims of Industry, *Industry: The Key to National Security* (Aims of Industry: 1944).

45 Aims of Industry, *Industry in Reconstruction* (Aims of Industry: 1943).

46 See M. Ivens and R. Dunstan (eds), *The Case for Capitalism* (Aims of Industry: 1967).

47 Aims of Industry, *30 Years of Aims of Industry* (Aims of Industry: 1973). 48 Hughes, *Spies at Work*, p. 166.

49 Labour Research Department (LRD), *Who is Behind Them?* (LRD: 1953).

50 Kisch, *The Private Life of Public Relations*, p. 32.

51 D. Kynaston, *Austerity Britain, 1945-51* (Bloomsbury: 2007), p. 318.

52 R. Noon, ‘Goodbye Mr Cube’, *History Today* 51:10 (2001), pp. 40-1, at p. 40.

53 Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, p. 413.

uncommon at the time.<sup>54</sup> In public relations terms, the sugar campaign was innovative and took a relatively modern and irreverent approach in its attacks.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps a more enduring outcome was that it brought the Tate and the Lyle families into the orbit of right-wing pressure groups. The firm and members of both families (whose operations had merged in 1921) became significant donors and senior figures within these groups: Lord Ian Lyle had joined the Aims of Industry council in 1948,<sup>56</sup> John Lyle was later its chairman, and Henry Saxon Tate was director of the Economic League.<sup>57</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, Aims of Industry briefings were used as the basis for parliamentary speeches and as evidence for arguments from Conservative MPs.<sup>58</sup> While these were sometimes met with knowing derision from Labour counterparts, formal links were denied, with Aims initially presented as a neutral, research-focused organization.<sup>59</sup>

Campaigns against nationalization of steel, shipbuilding and government investment in hydroelectricity in Scotland were prominent in the 1950s and 1960s. Aims of Industry criticized the management structures of nationalized industries, calling for greater information provision and employee share ownership; a 1956 pamphlet attacked 'active subversionists' who promoted industrial unrest made possible by workers' ignorance.<sup>60</sup> Campaigns were also launched against the use of direct (building) labour in local government, arguing that this was wasteful, stifled competition and had no positive impact on industrial relations.<sup>61</sup> Such campaigns continued in the 1960s.<sup>62</sup>

The focus of Aims of Industry's pamphlets and publicity shifted to trade-union power and industrial relations reform, prefiguring later

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54 P. Ackers, 'On Paternalism: Seven Observations on the Uses and Abuses of the Concept in Industrial Relations, Past and Present', *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations (HSIR)* 5 (1998), pp. 173-93, at p. 192.

55 Wilson, 'Techniques of Pressure', *Public Opinion Quarterly*.

56 A. Hugill, *Sugar and All That: A History of Tate & Lyle* (Gentry Books: 1978), p. 149; R. Noon, 'The Litigious Consequences of Mr Cube' (2009), [http://www.lovelanelives.com/index.php/blog/entry/the\\_litigious\\_consequences\\_of\\_mr\\_cube](http://www.lovelanelives.com/index.php/blog/entry/the_litigious_consequences_of_mr_cube) (accessed 6 October 2017).

57 N. Williamson, *The New Right: The Men behind Mrs Thatcher* (Spokesman/Tribune, Nottingham: n.d.), p. 6.

58 *The Times*, 14 July 1955; *Hansard* (HC), vol. 696, 18 June 1964, cols 1493-562. 59 National Health Service Contributions Bill, *Hansard* (HC), vol. 636, 16 March 1961, cols 1774-900.

60 *Financial Times*, 16 January 1956.

61 *Ibid.*, 2 May 1966; Aims of Industry, *Direct Labour and the Rates* (Aims of Industry: 1965); *The Salford Case: Direct Labour Loses £500,000* (Aims of Industry: 1966).

62 A. Sherman, *Price Control by Any Other Name: The National Board for Prices and Incomes and Its Powers* (Aims of Industry: 1967).

anti-union regulation.<sup>63</sup> Aims of Industry, though, was ‘only remotely concerned with anti-subversion’ in comparison with Common Cause or the Economic League, which provided information to supporters in industry to help them confront ‘militants’, despite their struggle to convince the wider public of ‘Moscow’s or Peking’s hand in our industrial affairs’.<sup>64</sup> Such organizations were easily dismissed in the late 1960s; journalist Eric Jacobs argued that most of his colleagues would not stop ‘instantly disposing of their literature in the wastepaper-basket’, that their influence on industrial relations was minimal, and they increasingly resembled ‘their mirror opposites - the headquarters and the repetitive pamphlets of exactly the groups they oppose’.<sup>65</sup>

Prior to the 1970 general election, adverts claimed that ‘creeping socialism is crippling industry, the economic heart of the country. And you’re paying. Things are tough all round and they’re going to get tougher unless you do something about it.’<sup>66</sup> The proliferation of left and radical groups after 1968 led to a far broader conception of subversion among the security services and right-wing pressure groups,<sup>67</sup> reflected in the increasingly combative tone of Aims of Industry publications and campaigns. The 1970 Conservative election victory was an important turning point. Aims of Industry increasingly attacked unions, ‘subversives’, Labour and public ownership, while also challenging Edward Heath’s government along with the Conservative right who viewed him as weak and moderate. This contributed to changes in the party which led to its ideological shift.

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63 For example, Conservative MP, David Mitchell proposed a registrar with power to investigate restrictive practices which could be referred to a special industrial court; legislation to enforce contracts of employment for a specific time and nationally agreed clauses binding on both parties; the distinction between an official and unofficial strike be ignored and replaced by breach of personal contract (that is, notice of termination be required); and the right to strike be dependent on a ‘cooling-off’ period. He recommended that statutory and contractual benefits be linked to continuity of service (potential recruits would be able to show their employment record): D. Mitchell, *Fuller Employment: Some Thoughts on Restrictive Practices, Strikes, and the Status of the Employee* (Aims of Industry: 1966); *Daily Telegraph*, 10 October 1966. Mitchell was Parliamentary Private Secretary to Keith Joseph after 1970, contributed to the development of the Industrial Relations Act 1971, and was a minister in the Thatcher governments: *Daily Telegraph*, 31 August 2014.

64 *Daily Telegraph*, 4 July 1968.

65 *Sunday Times*, 4 August 1968.

66 *Financial Times*, 2 April 1970.

67 G. D. White, ‘Holding the Mirror up to Hatred: Establishment Accounts of Radical Subversion after 1968’, *Works and Days* 20:1/2 (2002), pp. 277-94.

### **Aims of Industry in the 1970s: 'subversion', industrial relations, and the rise of Thatcherism**

Heath, whose 1970-74 government was marked by economic crises, industrial conflict, and internal party disputes, claimed Aims of Industry had no influence on his office, describing it as 'of no consequence' and 'an extremely right-wing capitalist organisation ... out to frighten people about socialism and to protect the interests of employers'.<sup>68</sup> Aims of Industry became increasingly vocal on industrial relations: unofficial strikes (a central concern of the 1965-68 (Donovan) Royal Commission) were described as leading to 'anarchy' at a level that was underestimated as official statistics did not count go-slows and overtime bans. Aims of Industry advocated a stronger legal framework, binding disputes procedures, removing social security payments from those laid off due to strike action, and argued that 'Communications between managers and the shop floor, and between unions and their members, must be improved to avoid misunderstandings.'<sup>69</sup>

Aims of Industry became increasingly practically engaged in industrial relations. During the 1970 printworkers' strike it produced 50,000 copies, using non-union labour, of a four-page newspaper 'heavy with ultra-right wing propaganda'.<sup>70</sup> This shift was further promoted by the appointment of Michael Ivens as director in February 1971. A self-described 'anarchist Tory' and libertarian,<sup>71</sup> former director at Standard Telephone and Cables, he was also director of the Industrial, Educational and Research Foundation (the later Foundation for Business Responsibility), and a political adviser to the breakaway Junior Hospital Doctors Association (which challenged the BMA's de facto closed shop). Ivens was a prolific letter writer to *The Times*, and became involved with a wide range of campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s. He was central to linking right-wing pressure groups. Together with the Economic League and Crozier, in the early 1970s Ivens was instrumental in convincing John Whitehorn, deputy director of the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) responsible for labour relations and industrial policy, to adopt a neoliberal orientation. Whitehorn, in turn, recommended in 1972 that CBI members increase funding to Aims of Industry, the Economic League, Common Cause, IRIS, and ISC.<sup>72</sup>

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68 Dispatches, *The Doughty Street Paper* (Channel 4, 1993).

69 Aims of Industry, *The Road to Ruin* (Aims of Industry: 1970). 70 *Economist*, 13 June 1970.

71 Ivens later dismissed Ayn Rand as a 'tiresome woman', *Philosophical Notes 2* (Libertarian Alliance: 1985).

72 Miller, 'How Neoliberalism Got Where It Is', p. 35; 'The Institute for the Study of Conflict: State Research Background Paper No. 1. Oct 77', *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory* 9:1 (1978), pp. 129-34.

While Ivens was later supportive of the Margaret Thatcher government (his influence was important, along with the IEA and CPS), his was a distinctive voice given his emphasis on responsibility to the public, customers and employees rather than only to shareholders, in contrast to other neoliberal ideologues such as Milton Friedman.<sup>73</sup>

In 1972 Ivens launched the Working Together campaign, formally independent of Aims of Industry but involving many of its leading figures and donors. Funded by, among others, Ford, Taylor Woodrow, GKN, Powell Duffryn, Automotive Products, Rank Hovis McDougall, and Portland Cement (all one-time subscribers to the Economic League),<sup>74</sup> it planned to produce consultancy reports to reduce conflict within collective bargaining 'and a research programme to find the best ways of making management more sensitive to human relations'.<sup>75</sup> At its launch, Ivens stated that the object was not 'to knock disrupters. We are not going out on an anti-Communist, anti-Trotskyist, anti-Anarchist platform', but this was undermined by remarks from Frank Taylor, chair of Taylor Woodrow, who claimed there were between 500 and 600 'anarchists' active in British industry and 'If they succeed, there would be Communism, an end to our free way of life and they would be the Commissars'.<sup>76</sup> Ivens stepped down as director of Working Together after a year, replaced by Bill Nightingale from the British Institute of Management. The only union involvement was from Chapple of the EETPU and Jack Peel of the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers.<sup>77</sup>

Aims of Industry had been active in the Campaign against Building Industry Nationalisation and the opposition to the national construction

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73 *Financial Times*, 30 March 1973; 24 March 1972; J. Tomlinson, 'Ivens, Michael William (1924-2001), Free-enterprise Propagandist and Post', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press: 2009), pp. 1-4.

74 Hughes, *Spies at Work*.

75 *Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 1972.

76 *Financial Times*, 12 April 1972. Taylor, later Baron Taylor of Hadfield, founded the construction company which was a major donor to the Conservative Party, BUI, Economic League, Aims of Industry and other right-wing groups, as well as involvement with blacklisting construction workers.

77 *The Times*, 5 April 1973; *Independent*, 18 May 1993. Peel was on the TUC general council (1966-72) then director of industrial relations (1973-79) in the European Economic Community (EEC) Social Affairs Directorate. Chapple supported groups within right-wing networks, attending IEA seminars and writing for its journal *Economic Affairs*, receiving an award from Aims of Industry, and in the 1980s supporting the Committee for a Free World, an initiative founded by US, European and Israeli intellectuals, involving the CIA-linked US anti-communist journalist, Melvin Lasky, which campaigned against unilateral disarmament: Williamson, *The New Right*, p. 16. These connections are not mentioned in F. Chapple, *Sparks Fly! A Trade Union Life* (Michael Joseph: 1984).



workers' strike in 1972.<sup>78</sup> Early Euroscepticism also became apparent, with it arguing that any economic benefits of European Economic Community (EEC) membership were overstated and its main aim was political.<sup>79</sup> Later proposals from Europe - board-level employee representation, co-determination, employee share allocations and compulsory joint consultation - were dismissed on the basis that the trade-unionists central to their administration would be 'political zealots whose main aim is to destroy the market economy'.<sup>80</sup> In response to government consultation on proposals from the EEC on board-level representation, Aims of Industry argued that 'although many trade union officials in this country are responsible and democratic men, we have a large number of Communists, Trotskyists and Maoists whose avowed intention it is to cause industrial strife to bring down society'.<sup>81</sup> This campaign against the EEC's regulatory and social policy was indicative of the tensions that informed the Conservative Party's growing Euroscepticism in the 1980s and the contradictions within the wider Thatcher project.<sup>82</sup>

A 1973 pamphlet celebrating thirty years of Aims of Industry mentioned little about unions, industrial relations, or 'subversives', focusing instead on its promotion of private enterprise.<sup>83</sup> But campaigns in support of the Conservatives in the two 1974 general elections focused on union militancy and subversion in a strident and occasionally hysterical tone. In one publicity stunt, coffins marked 'RIP Free Enterprise' were sent to businesses along with literature warning of extremism and the threat from proposed workers' representation on boards.<sup>84</sup> Aims of Industry warned that:

between 5 per cent and 10 per cent of trade union officials are Communists. ... [O]ther militant groups, the Trotskyists, Maoists and

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78 *Hansard* (HC), 'Distribution of Profits and of Assets for Political Objects', 3 March 1980, vol. 980, cols 59-107; *ibid.*, 'Shrewsbury 24 (Release of Papers)', 23 January 2014, vol. 574.

79 *Financial Times*, 20 June 1963.

80 F. Broadway, *Power on the Shopfloor: Co-Operation, Control or Chaos?* (Aims of Industry: 1972).

81 Aims of Industry, *Aims of Industry Recommendations to the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry on the Draft Fifth Directive of the European Economic Community Relating to the Harmonisation of the Law Affecting Joint Stock Companies and Providing for Worker Participation in Supervisory and Management Boards* (Aims of Industry: 1973).

82 P. Dorey, 'Towards Exit from the EU: The Conservative Party's Increasing Euroscepticism since the 1980s', *Politics and Governance* 5:2 (2017), pp. 27-40.

83 Aims of Industry, *30 Years of Aims of Industry*.

84 Aims of Industry, press release, 18 January 1974, 'Coffins Go to British Industry', in *The Radical Right and Patriotic Movements in Britain* (Harvester), microfiche collection, reference 2802.

Anarchists ... are bitterly opposed to the Communists but will join forces for industrial conflict. Then we have the fellow travellers, those who work with the Communists because of sympathy or because they are secret members of the Party.<sup>85</sup>

In January 1974, it launched campaigns supported by £500,000 (equivalent to £5.1 million in 2018 values) from donors, to 'alert British industry and British workers so they know a Communist when they see one'.<sup>86</sup> Industrial militancy was linked to emerging corporate campaigning tactics, particularly those targeting apartheid-era South Africa and calls for divestment.<sup>87</sup> Election materials headlined 'Don't be fooled out of your freedom' featured pictures of Joseph Stalin removing a jester's mask, stating 'all thinking people should think very hard indeed before they allow little Stalins to gain more power'.<sup>88</sup> Bemoaning the lack of public protest against strikes and low 'moderate' turnout in union elections, Aims of Industry complained that 'Attempts to expose what is going on have been met with bland little jokes about "seeing Reds under every bed". The harsh fact is that the Reds are now in the beds, with a lethal embrace round Britain's crucial institutions, the trade unions.'<sup>89</sup> Another pamphlet, *Blackshirts under the Bed*, bemoaned the accusations of fascism directed at Aims of Industry and other groups that attacked the left, arguing 'that Fascists don't exist in Britain - not even in groups such as the National Front'.<sup>90</sup> Further revelations included claims that the journalist and former spy, Chapman Pincher, described by Ivens as 'a good, blunt, honest and humorous friend',<sup>91</sup> had uncovered a KGB officer 'running the Soviet plan for the takeover of British trade unions'.<sup>92</sup>

Labour proposals to repeal the Industrial Relations Act 1971<sup>93</sup> were criticized for the powers this would return to pickets,<sup>94</sup> together with

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85 Aims of Industry, *Campaign against the Industrial Wreckers* (Aims of Industry: 1974).

86 *The Times*, 28 January 1974.

87 Aims of Industry, *Organised Political Pressures on Companies: Anti-Anti-Report (Counter Counter Information Services)* (Aims of Industry: 1973).

88 *Daily Mail*, 4 February 1974.

89 Aims of Industry, *Reds under the Bed* (Aims of Industry: 1974).

90 *Guardian*, 14 February 1974; Aims of Industry, *Blackshirts under the Bed* (Aims of Industry: 1974).

91 *Spectator*, 2 May 1987.

92 *Sunday Times*, 17 February 1974.

93 The Industrial Relations Act 1971 established a new legal framework to regulate industrial action, enforced by the National Industrial Relations Court. See P. L. Davies and M. Freedland, *Labour Legislation and Public Policy: A Contemporary History* (Oxford University Press: 1983), pp. 275-328.

94 F. Broadway, *Licence for Extremists* (Aims of Industry: 1974).

condemnation of ‘unionocracies’<sup>95</sup> and the prospect of ‘socialists on the board’ within the proposed tripartite National Enterprise Board.<sup>96</sup> Such hostility and suspicion need to be viewed in the contemporary context of rumoured military takeovers, private armies and strikebreaking forces. Lord Chalfont acknowledged that ‘the voice of Aims of Industry is becoming more insistent and more extreme’.<sup>97</sup> In 1974 Colonel Juan Hobbs of BUI, together with Ivens, Norris McWhirter (*Guinness Book of Records* co-founder), and John Gouriet (ex-army officer) set up NAFF to take a more direct approach to industrial conÅict.<sup>98</sup> NAFF was supported by many within right-wing pressure groups and public figures sympathetic to the wider ‘declinist’ narrative, including Crozier, Taylor of Taylor Woodrow, Kenneth Watkins (an Aims of Industry contributor), Alec Bedser (former Surrey and England cricketer), and Douglas Bader (Second World War pilot).<sup>99</sup> Between 1975 and 1979 NAFF funded legal challenges to Labour legislation, winning actions against the introduction of comprehensive education in Tameside, the Union of Postal Workers’ boycott of mail from South Africa, the dismissal of three British Rail employees under a closed-shop agreement (taken to the European Court of Human Rights) and, later, retrospective claims under the 1982 Employment Act for workers dismissed under closed-shop agreements.<sup>100</sup> NAFF was especially active during the 1976-78 Grunwick dispute, funding legal challenges and establishing a strikebreaking postal operation to circumvent the postal workers’ boycott of the firm.<sup>101</sup> Joseph and Norman Tebbit MP denounced the Scarman Court of Inquiry report on Grunwick,<sup>102</sup> using the term ‘red fascism’ in relation to the Labour government’s acceptance of secondary picketing, and linking the Conservative opposition to the NAFF campaign around the dispute and its calls for a more forceful response to unions.<sup>103</sup> In 1982 NAFF changed its name to the Freedom Association to

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95 Aims of Industry, *Always to be Shielded* (Aims of Industry: 1974). 96 Aims of Industry, *Socialists on the Board* (Aims of Industry: 1974). 97 *The Times*, 5 August 1974.

98 D. Miller and W. Dinan, *A Century of Spin: How Public Relations Became the Cutting Edge of Corporate Power* (Pluto: 2008), p. 70. N. Nugent, ‘The National Association for Freedom’, in R. King and N. Nugent (eds), *Respectable Rebels: Middle Class Campaigns in Britain in the 1970s* (Hodder and Stoughton: 1979), pp. 76-100.

99 P. Radan, ‘Law, Politics, and the Attorney-General: The Context and Impact of *Gouriet v. Union of Post Office Workers*’, *Macquarie Law Journal* 16 (2016), pp. 105-26, at p. 105; *Guardian*, 3 December 1975.

100 Williamson, *The New Right*, p. 14.

101 J. McGowan, “‘Dispute’”, “‘Battle’”, “‘Siege’”, “‘Farce’?”: Grunwick 30 Years On’, *Contemporary British History* 22:3 (2008), pp. 383-406.

102 Court of Inquiry (Scarman), *Report*, Cmnd 6922 (1977).

103 A. Denham and M. Garnett, *Keith Joseph* (Acumen, Chesham: 2001), pp. 310-11; N. Tebbit, *Upwardly Mobile* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson: 1988), p. 153.

avoid confusion with the National Front,<sup>104</sup> and remains active at the fringes of the Conservative Party and more recently the UK Independence Party.

Described as '[Friedrich] Hayek's footsoldiers',<sup>105</sup> these right-wing groups were increasingly engaged in actual disputes rather than just seeking to influence opinion. A feature of the period was 'a mixture of panic, paranoia and pessimism', partly in response to the 1976 International Monetary Fund bailout,<sup>106</sup> with a hardening of attitudes towards unions. Even the Duke of Edinburgh contributed to an IEA collection (together with Hayek, Nigel Lawson MP and others) warning of 'international subversion'.<sup>107</sup> Aims of Industry publications warned of societal breakdown led by unions and the left that could necessitate the army being called in to restore order.<sup>108</sup> Most notoriously, GB75 (established by former SAS head, David Stirling) and the UNISON and Civil Assistance organizations (founded by Walter Walker, former NATO commander for Northern Europe) demonstrated a widespread belief that the military or paramilitary bodies might have to maintain essential services in the event of a general strike and a breakdown of social order.<sup>109</sup> While GB75 was 'stood down' after 1974, Stirling launched TRUEMID - to support 'moderates' and counter militants within unions - which made links with the Economic League and IRIS.<sup>110</sup> On Stirling's death in 1990, Ivens admitted that Stirling had 'asked me to get him trade unionists', including right-wing officials from the engineering and civil service unions, in the 'still extant' TRUEMID.<sup>111</sup> Building on long-established 'declinist' narratives on Britain's role in the world and its economy,<sup>112</sup> military figures, with close

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104 A. Gamble, 'The Middle-Class Revolt', *Parliamentary Affairs* 33:2 (1980), pp. 233-4.

105 Miller and Dinan, *A Century of Spin*, p. 71.

106 F. Ween, *Strange Days Indeed: The Golden Age of Paranoia* (Fourth Estate: 2009), p. 309. The British government in 1976 received a loan of \$3.9 billion (\$17.2 billion in 2018 values), leading to public-expenditure cuts and a fall in the value of sterling.

107 Duke of Edinburgh, 'Intellectual Dissent and the Reversal of Trends', in A. Seldon (ed.), *The Coming Confrontation: Will the Open Society Survive to 1989?* (Institute of Economic Affairs: 1978), p. 206.

108 Aims of Industry, *Halfway to 1984: 1979* (Aims of Industry: 1974).

109 A. Beckett, *When the Lights Went Out: What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies* (Faber & Faber: 2009), pp. 376-7. Retired intelligence officers and senior military figures reportedly discussed plans to seize control and install Lord Mountbatten as interim prime minister, and Crozier had lobbied the military in support of a military takeover: *Guardian*, 15 March 2006.

110 S. Dorril and R. Ramsay, 'Wilson, MI5 and the Rise of Thatcher: Covert Operations in British Politics, 1974-78', *Lobster* 11 (1986), p. 20.

111 *Independent*, 17 November 1990; Osler, 'Inside the Moderates'.

112 J. Tomlinson, 'Thrice Denied: "Declinism" as a Recurrent Theme in British History in the Long Twentieth Century', *Twentieth Century British History (TCBH)* 20:2 (2009), pp. 227-51.

links to the arms industry and right-wing networks ‘trying to keep Britain powerful’,<sup>113</sup> demonstrate the backlash against militant trade-unionism and social-democratic politics.

Right-wing pressure groups were well resourced and funded; the Labour Research Department claimed that Aims of Industry, the Economic League, Common Cause, and others received over £1 million (£11.9 million in 2018 values) in 1973-74.<sup>114</sup> Labour Cabinet discussions raised concerns about ‘allegedly non-party organisations like Aims of Industry’, their funding and how this supported the Conservatives though not appearing in declarations on electoral spending.<sup>115</sup> Such campaigning established the context for the major changes in the Conservative Party between 1974 and 1979. The positions of Aims of Industry and similar bodies moved from the fringes to the mainstream of Conservative policy and strategy.

In 1975 Aims of Industry launched its annual Free Enterprise Day, the ‘July rising of the silent majority’ and a rival to May Day.<sup>116</sup> Thatcher, who became Opposition Leader in February 1975, spoke at the inaugural lunch: ‘Free Enterprise Day ... marks the beginning of the fight back for freedom. It is a battle I’m proud to lead. And it is a battle we dare not lose.’ The first annual Free Enterprise Award was given to Joseph,<sup>117</sup> leading to concerns among more ‘liberal’ Tories that Thatcher was increasingly influenced by the right of the party, including the monetarist and Eurosceptic views of Powell (by now an Ulster Unionist MP).<sup>118</sup> At the first of these subsequently annual events, it was announced that the name would change to Aims of Freedom and Enterprise (but reverted back in 1978) and membership was extended to the general public rather than solely businesses, with a target of two million members. Ivens explained that they were ‘concerned with threats to freedom other than enterprise - individual freedom, freedom of

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113 Adam Curtis in *The Mayfair Set*, part 1 (Channel 4, 18 July 1999).

114 *Guardian*, 29 August 1974; LRD, *Big Business and Politics* (LRD: 1974).

115 Cabinet Conclusions, 4 April 1974: CAB 128/54/8, The National Archives, Kew, London. Aims of Industry operated as a private company, meaning payments for ‘services’ from donors would not have to be declared as political donations under the 1967 Companies Act.

116 *Daily Mail*, 1 July 1975.

117 *Ibid.*, 2 July 1975. Aims of Industry award recipients included airline entrepreneur, Freddie Laker; John Dettmer of the Economic League; Conservative MPs Margaret Thatcher, Geoffrey Howe, and John Redwood; economists Friedrich Hayek and Patrick Minford; Norris McWhirter; publisher Eddy Shah; journalists Woodrow Wyatt and Brian Walden; Walter Goldsmith of the Institute of Directors (IoD); Frank Chapple; Shirley Porter; Lord Taylor of Hadfeld of Taylor Woodrow and the Business Services Association (which represented outsourcing firms): *Daily Telegraph*, 5 July 1983, 5 July 1988, 1 July 1989; *Financial Times*, 1 July 1977, 27 September 1984; *The Times*, 1 July 1982, 21 February 1996; *Sunday Times*, 1 July 1990; *Daily Mail*, 2 July 1986.

118 *Economist*, 12 April 1975.

the press, freedom under the law [and] educational freedoms'.<sup>119</sup> Enduring concerns included the content of university courses, assumed left-wing sympathies among academics, and a supposed lack of 'free market' literature in university libraries.<sup>120</sup>

Criticism by the Conservative Party right-wing (and its associated networks), of the Labour government's Trade Union and Labour Relations Act 1974 (as amended in 1976), the Employment Protection Act 1975,<sup>121</sup> and the Bullock Report proposals on industrial democracy,<sup>122</sup> prompted the Conservative Party to establish working groups to develop policy. These included the Authority of Government group (consisting of Conservative MPs and officials and a Tate & Lyle executive nominated by Joseph), with a focus on the maintenance of order in the event of major, politicized strikes challenging a future government;<sup>123</sup> the Economic Reconstruction Group, from which a nationalized industries subgroup developed the Ridley report (later seen as a blueprint for the response to the 1984-85 miners' strike);<sup>124</sup> and the Stepping Stones programme, which focused on policies and strategies to

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119 *Guardian*, 1 July 1975.

120 Joseph discussed with Ivens and Alfred Sherman of CPS about distributing Aims of Industry and IEA publications to counter this: 1975 Sep 8 Mo, Archive (IEA MSS) Sir Keith Joseph minute ('Minute of meeting between KJ, Michael Ivens, AS on Monday 8 September, 1975': Box 295, IEA MSS, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, California); archive accessed from the Margaret Thatcher Foundation at <https://www.margarethatracker.org/document/117114>. Sociologist David Marsland (who argued that 'more than 250,000 people a year were being trained as critical saboteurs of Britain through their study of contemporary sociology') was later presented the Aims of Industry Margaret Thatcher Award by Thatcher herself: *The Times*, 2 July 1991.

121 P. Smith and G. Morton, 'The Conservative Governments' Reform of Employment Law, 1979-97: "Stepping Stones" and the "New Right" Agenda', *HSIR* 12 (2001), pp. 131-47. This legislation repealed the 1971 Industrial Relations Act and was central to the employment dimension of the 1974-79 Labour governments' 'social contract'.

122 Committee of Inquiry on Industrial Democracy (Bullock) *Report*, Cmnd 6706 (1977). See J. Phillips, 'UK Business Power and Opposition to the Bullock Committee's 1977 Proposals on Worker Directors', *HSIR* 31/32 (2011), pp. 1-30. In *The Times*, 9 February 1977, Ivens criticized the report's 'naïve, unsuitable and dangerous panaceas' and bemoaned the lack of attention to the human relations movement, Tavistock studies, US studies of human resources and direct communication as alternative approaches to worker participation. 123 P. Dorey, 'Conciliation or Confrontation with the Trade Unions? The Conservative Party's "Authority of Government Group", 1975-1978', *HSIR* 27/28 (2009), pp. 135-51.

124 *Idem*, "'It Was Just Like Arming to Face the Threat of Hitler in the Late 1930s.'" The Ridley Report and the Conservative Party's Preparations for the 1984-85 Miners' Strike', *HSIR* 34 (2013), pp. 173-214.

weaken trade-union power as an obstacle to economic reform.<sup>125</sup> Joseph had faced criticism from Alfred Sherman, Alan Walters, and others for his role in the Heath government, but these years saw him embedded within right-wing policy institutes, and he played a vital role in the CPS's formation.<sup>126</sup> The relationship between such policy institutes and MPs, including Joseph and Geoffrey Howe (the latter central to developing the Industrial Relations Act 1971) and accepting the union 'reform' proposals in the Stepping Stones report,<sup>127</sup> was of major significance in establishing neoliberal ideology and policies after the election of Thatcher as party leader in 1975.<sup>128</sup> Thatcher's memoirs claim she gave NAFF 'as much support as [she] could'<sup>129</sup> and she was supportive of Aims of Industry, speaking at its events within months of becoming leader.<sup>130</sup>

Conservative Party policy increasingly resonated with long-standing positions of Aims of Industry. The 1979 Conservative manifesto was committed to controlling inflation, 'reducing government intervention in industry', reducing waste from public-sector direct-labour schemes, reforming picketing and the closed shop, introducing ballots in unions and reducing strikes, overhauling the mid-1970s 'social contract', and for tax cuts and privatization (starting with aerospace, shipbuilding, and road-freight transport).<sup>131</sup> The policies were shaped by the experiences of governments since 1970 rather than policy institutes and pressure groups, but addressed concerns held by Aims of Industry for decades. It had played a role, on its own and within wider networks, in creating the agenda within which the Conservative Party and subsequent governments operated. Most of Aims of Industry's output in the 1970s had focused on defining a wider agenda: 'In spite of the Donovan apologia, it is pretty clear that the functions and place of trade unions in British society are in urgent need of clarification',<sup>132</sup> but it

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125 *Idem*, 'The Stepping Stones Programme: The Conservative Party's Struggle to Develop a Trade-Union Policy, 1975-79', *HSIR* 35 (2014), pp. 89-116;

J. Hoskyns, *Just in Time: Inside the Thatcher Revolution* (Aurum Press: 2000), pp. 158-9.

126 Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 237; Denham and Garnett, *Keith Joseph*, p. 267. See also Jackson, 'The Think-Tank Archipelago', pp. 58-9; B. Jackson and R. Saunders, 'Introduction: Varieties of Thatcherism', in Jackson and Saunders (eds), *Making Thatcher's Britain*, pp. 1-22, at p. 4.

127 A. Taylor, 'The "Stepping Stones" Programme: Conservative Party Thinking on Trade Unions, 1975-9', *HSIR* 11 (2001), pp. 109-33.

128 Vinen, *Thatcher's Britain*, pp. 33-4.

129 M. Thatcher, *The Path to Power* (HarperCollins: 1995), p. 399.

130 Jackson, 'The Think-Tank Archipelago', pp. 58-9; *Independent*, 5 September 2006.

131 *Conservative Party General Election Manifesto 1979*, <https://www.margarethatcher.org/document/110858> (accessed 3 May 2019).

132 H. B. Acton, *The Right to Work and the Right to Strike* (Aims of Industry: 1972).

also made specific policy proposals such as binding dispute resolution and removing social security payments from workers laid off due to strikes.<sup>133</sup>

### **Aims of Industry, the Thatcher governments and the 1980s**

Post-1979 Conservative governments combined ‘liberal’ and ‘conservative’ New Right currents, which promoted economic liberalism, monetarism, supply-side economics, privatization and deregulation, and right-wing populism and concerns over ‘social order ... authority, hierarchy and balance’. The latter were deemed to be undermined by the permissiveness of liberal and social-democratic regimes, creating the context in which Thatcherism emerged and shaped its goals and objectives.<sup>134</sup> Policy institutes (such as the IEA, CPS, and ASI) and pressure groups (including Aims of Industry, Economic League, ISC, and the Freedom Association), often with overlapping personnel and sources of funds, supported ‘a network of journalists, lobbyists, academics, business executives, and politicians committed to spreading New-Right ideas and supporting Thatcher against her enemies in the party ... to establish the legitimacy of their ideas within the British conservative tradition ... to claim that they were the true Tories’.<sup>135</sup> While some commentators acknowledge the importance of such networks when the Conservatives were in opposition, they question their impact after 1979.<sup>136</sup> Yet Thatcher admired Aims of Industry and Ivens was a frequent visitor to Downing Street.<sup>137</sup> Her first Parliamentary Private Secretary, Ian Gow, had written in 1977 an Aims of Industry pamphlet on privatization, with an introduction by Ivens.<sup>138</sup>

The public relations and lobbying dimension of Aims of Industry’s activities continued; for example, it was critical of union bias in media coverage of the 1980 steel strike.<sup>139</sup> The ‘Argonauts’ group (named after the dining club where they met) emerged during this dispute.<sup>140</sup>

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133 Aims of Industry, *The Road to Ruin*, research by S. McKnight.

134 A. Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State* (2nd edn; Macmillan: 1994), p. 68; B. Elliott and D. McCrone, ‘Class, Culture and Morality: A Sociological Analysis of Neo-Conservatism’, *Sociological Review* 35:3 (1987), pp. 485-515.

135 Gamble, *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, p. 146.

136 Vinen, *Thatcher’s Britain*, p. 84; Williamson, *Conservative Economic Policymaking*.

137 Dispatches, *The Doughty Street Papers*.

138 I. Gow, *A Practical Approach to Denationalisation* (Aims of Industry: 1977).

139 *Daily Mail*, 14 March 1980.

140 *Guardian*, 23 August 1981; A. Sherman, *Paradoxes of Power: Reflections on the Thatcher Interlude* (Societas: 2005).



Key members included Ivens, Sherman, Walters,<sup>141</sup> John Hoskyns<sup>142</sup> (then in the Downing Street Policy Unit), Walter Goldsmith (Institute of Directors, IoD), and (Lord) Tom Boardman (a Heath government minister and president of the Association of British Chambers of Commerce).<sup>143</sup> The group's purpose was to provide 'an intelligence network ... on economic and industrial issues so that Thatcher doesn't have to rely on Whitehall information or the Tory wets'.<sup>144</sup> Meetings included representatives of employers' associations and small businesses (Engineering Employers' Federation (EEF), Road Haulage Association, Federation of Master Builders, Chambers of Commerce and the Union of Independent Companies),<sup>145</sup> who raised their concerns about unions, strikes and the limitations of the Employment Act 1980. The CBI had called on its members to subscribe to Aims and the Economic League at various points; such groups offered a 'pressure valve' for industrialists to advance certain positions without bringing institutions like the CBI into direct conflict with government policy.<sup>146</sup> Informal networks such as the Argonauts were significant in transmitting neoliberal ideas beyond the larger firms typically represented by the CBI.<sup>147</sup>

After the 1980 Employment Act, the CBI and EEF had called for a moratorium on new labour law, but Aims of Industry, the IoD and Conservative backbenchers continued to lobby for stronger reforms.<sup>148</sup> Terence Beckett, CBI director general, articulated some business leaders' opposition to government economic policy when calling for a 'bare-knuckle fight' in November 1980 but this soon dissipated as the CBI was pressurized into more explicit support for neoliberal policies.<sup>149</sup> Groups such as the Argonauts were described as 'para-politicians' by Sherman,<sup>150</sup> and they

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141 Walters became Thatcher's economic adviser in 1981.

142 Hoskyns was active, with Sherman, in the group that produced the Stepping Stones proposals that prefigured 'reforms' of unions and industrial relations in the 1980s, later becoming IoD director and active within anti-EU campaigning: *Daily Telegraph*, 20 October 2014; A. Taylor, 'The "Stepping Stones" Programme', *HSIR*.

143 Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p. 158.

144 Williamson, *The New Right*, p. 13.

145 Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, pp. 158-9, 188, 276.

146 W. Grant and D. Marsh, *The Confederation of British Industry* (Hodder and Stoughton: 1977), p. 72.

147 Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, pp. 158-9, reports attending dinners with Chapple and Alistair McAlpine.

148 R. Taylor, 'Under the Heel?', *New Society* 55 (1981), p. 948.

149 N. Rollings, 'British Business and Margaret Thatcher: The Confederation of British Industry and Its So-Called "Bare Knuckle Fight" with the Government', paper presented to the European Business History Association Congress, Vienna, August 2017.

150 Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 285.

lobbied for the removal of James Prior as Secretary of State for Employment.<sup>151</sup> His replacement in 1981 by Tebbit, with a more explicit anti-union agenda, was 'claimed as a coup by the group'.<sup>152</sup>

While Aims of Industry's long-held objectives were now part of the Conservative government's policy agenda, it maintained its focus on 'extremists'. A 1981 pamphlet, *Marxism and Managers*, recommended that managers read a selection of Marxist writings, Hayek's *Road to Serfdom* and Aims of Industry and ISC publications, to develop counterarguments against Marxist employees.<sup>153</sup> A pamphlet by Roger Rosewell, a former International Socialists industrial organizer,<sup>154</sup> warned of Marxist cells in the motor industry, arguing that 'managers will have to wake up to the dangers that exist', 'maintain proper records on disruptors' and 'should examine whether time o6b7 for union duties is legitimate or just an excuse for Marxist activities'.<sup>155</sup>

In September 1984, at the height of the miners' strike, Aims of Industry appealed for funds for a 'Campaign against Revolutionary Violence' 'aimed at publicising the men and methods involved in violent picketing and linked actions'.<sup>156</sup> Pamphlets attacked the NUM, its president Arthur Scargill, the conduct of the strike,<sup>157</sup> and supported working miners.<sup>158</sup> In

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151 Lobbying against Prior was underway before 1979 from right-wing MPs, 'organisations like the Freedom Association and almost always by the popular press - the Daily Mail, the Daily Express and the Sun': J. Prior, *A Balance of Power* (Hamish Hamilton: 1986), p. 154.

152 *Sunday Times*, 20 September 1981.

153 K. W. Watkins, *Marxism and Managers* (Aims of Industry: 1981). Works by Karl Marx recommended are the *Communist Manifesto*, *Wage Labour and Capital*, the *Critique of Political Economy and Value, Price and Profit*, and Vladimir Lenin's *What Is to Be Done?*, *State and Revolution*, and *Imperialism*.

154 A. Hosken, *Nothing Like a Dame: The Scandals of Shirley Porter* (Granta: 2007), pp. 80-2.

155 R. Rosewell, *Dealing with the Marxist Threat to Industry* (Aims of Industry: 1982). Individuals associated with Aims of Industry were implicated in using its associated charity, the Federation for Business Responsibility, to channel funds to the Conservative Party, particularly the disgraced former leader of Westminster City Council, Porter, to whom Ivens was close, and for whom Rosewell was political adviser. Porter instigated the 'homes for votes' scandal which involved moving social housing tenants out of the council area on the assumption they were more likely to vote Labour: *Guardian*, 16 February 1994, 14 May 1995.

156 *Daily Telegraph*, 14 September 1984.

157 Aims of Industry, *Revolution and Privilege: Some Questions to the NUM, Arthur Scargill and the Government* (Aims of Industry: 1984).

158 Aims of Industry, *Twenty-Seven Miners at Work Tell Their Story* (Aims of Industry: 1985).

her speech accepting the annual Aims of Industry Free Enterprise Award in October 1984, Thatcher said there must be no 'surrender' to the NUM.<sup>159</sup> The role of the radical right, the security services and the police during the miners' strike is well documented.<sup>160</sup> A key player was David Hart who operated in coalmining areas to support working miners and gather intelligence, initially with his own money.<sup>161</sup> He facilitated donations from private-sector firms to support working miners, organized legal action against the NUM, and remained in close contact with Thatcher.<sup>162</sup> Hart also helped to set up the breakaway Union of Democratic Mineworkers in Nottinghamshire and lobbied Thatcher and Ian MacGregor, National Coal Board chairman, not to settle with the NUM.

Aims of Industry campaigned for the abolition of the National Dock Labour scheme in the late 1980s,<sup>163</sup> and maintained some influence.<sup>164</sup> But by this time, right-wing policy institutes were being marginalized within the Conservative Party by the professionalization of public relations and

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159 *The Times*, 18 October 1984.

160 S. Milne, *The Enemy Within: The Secret War Against the Miners* (3rd edn; Verso: 2004), pp. 323-5.

161 Hart had met Thatcher at a CPS dinner in 1980 (*Daily Telegraph*, 5 January 2011), but was marginalized after the strike following material published in *British Briefing* critical of Ronald Reagan, 'incipient anti-Americanism' threatening Britain and arguing that 'Thatcher could only just keep it in check' (Miller and Dinan, *A Century of Spin*, pp. 134-5). He acted briefly as adviser to ministers Malcolm Rifkind and Michael Portillo in the 1990s. Hart described the Economic League as 'wankers' but remained active in right-wing networks. He founded the Committee for a Free Britain, which called for privatization of state schools and healthcare, flat taxes, and a basic income scheme to replace social security. His address was a law firm in the same building as Aims of Industry, although Ivens denied knowledge, dismissing the group as 'silly right-wing pressure groups ... run by the same small gang of giggling, loutish schoolboys': *Guardian*, 10 June 1987; *Financial Times*, 23 June 1987; *Independent*, 2 December 1990.

162 J. Phillips, 'Containing, Isolating, and Defeating the Miners: The UK Cabinet Ministerial Group on Coal and the Three Phases of the 1984-85 Strike', *HSIR* 35 (2014), pp. 127-41, at p. 129. Hart took over, from the ISC's Crozier, editorship of *British Briefing* (formerly *Background Briefing on Subversion*), a clandestine circular (part-funded by Rupert Murdoch and distributed to politicians and journalists) which named and made accusations against figures on the left: *Daily Telegraph*, 5 January 2011; Milne, *The Enemy Within*, pp. 323-33.

163 M. Ivens, 'Labour Market Deregulation and Economic Performance: The Case of Britain's Docks: A Response to Turnbull', *Work, Employment and Society* 5:4 (1991), pp. 640-1; Iain Dale, *The End of the Dock Labour Scheme* (Aims of Industry: 1991).

164 Nigel Mobbs of Slough Estates, and Aims of Industry, was appointed chair of a Department of Trade and Industry advisory panel on deregulation in 1988: *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1988.

lobbying, and revelations about the activities of some individuals. Hart had lost favour with the Conservative leadership; Sherman was sacked from the CPS in 1983<sup>165</sup> and forced out of the Conservative Party after trying to bring French National Front leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, to a Conservative Party conference fringe meeting;<sup>166</sup> the Economic League was declining and controversy arose over the funding of BUI.<sup>167</sup> Between 1985 and 1988 the BUI, which was closed down in 1992, had rented offices at the Economic League's headquarters before leaving to avoid increasing negative publicity, moving into the same building as Aims of Industry.<sup>168</sup> After the Economic League's blacklisting activities were exposed by investigative journalists,<sup>169</sup> it was disbanded in 1993 as donor companies distanced themselves. (It had attempted to diversify by monitoring activists opposed to multinational companies and considered developing registers of gay and lesbian people, due to their assumed far-left politics and risk of HIV infection, thought to be useful to insurance companies.<sup>170</sup>) Successors to the Economic League included the Consultancy Association, which continued to organize 'blacklisting' of activists, and Caprim (Henry Saxon Tate was a non-executive director).<sup>171</sup>

With the end of the Cold War, legislation to regulate and restrict trade unions and industrial action, and large-scale privatization, Aims of Industry's goals had been largely achieved by the 1990s. Some individuals associated with it became active in the proliferation of anti-EU groups in the 1990s, including the Conservative 'Bruges Group', Business for Sterling, and Open Europe.<sup>172</sup> They campaigned against Labour before the 1997 election, preparing pamphlets of supposedly awkward questions to be directed at candidates,<sup>173</sup> and called for business to donate to the Conservatives and 'join forces to rebut the evils of socialism'.<sup>174</sup> With the death in 2001 of Ivens, the public face of Aims of Industry, the organization largely withered away.

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165 *Daily Telegraph*, 28 August 2006.

166 Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 320. 167

*Independent*, 16 January 1989.

168 Cockett, *Thinking the Unthinkable*, p. 74; Hughes, *Spies at Work*, p. 301.

169 M. Hollingworth and R. Norton-Taylor, *Blacklist: The Inside Story of Political Vetting* (Hogarth: 1988).

170 Hughes, *Spies at Work*, pp. 288, 304-5.

171 D. Smith and P. Chamberlain, *Blacklisted: The Secret War between Big Business and Union Activists* (New Internationalist, Oxford: 2015), p. 264.

172 *Britain in Europe* website (archived entry) - 'Aims of Industry', [http://web.archive.org/web/20030503232748/http://www.britainineurope.org.uk/new/sh\\_antieu.phtml?;d=60](http://web.archive.org/web/20030503232748/http://www.britainineurope.org.uk/new/sh_antieu.phtml?;d=60) (accessed 20 August 2019).

173 Aims of Industry, *Questions for Tony Blair When He Mounts the Platform* (Aims of Industry: 1995).

174 *Financial Times*, 7 October 1996.

The day after the 2016 UK referendum that voted to leave the European Union (EU), the historian Andrew Roberts praised Ivens, the Freedom Association, the McWhirter brothers, and others for doing ‘as much to keep the popular insurgency alive over more than four decades as Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson and Michael Gove, who had the honour of lighting the blue touchpaper this year’.<sup>175</sup> Right-wing pressure groups with highly opaque funding - including the IEA, CPS, ASI and more recent ones such as the TaxPayers’ Alliance (campaigning for reduced taxes), the Global Warming Policy Institute (against environmental regulations and founded by Lawson), and anti-EU policy institutes - have co-ordinated with the Conservatives’ Eurosceptic right to promote Brexit and influence its aftermath.<sup>176</sup> These networks, within which Aims of Industry had been a stalwart since the 1940s, continue to influence British politics.

### **Aims of Industry: power, influence, the development of neoliberalism, and Conservative politics**

Aims of Industry articulated the voice of the political right within sections of the business community. Tracing the relationship between and influence of organizations within such networks - involving overlapping private, state and para-state bodies - is complex given the opacity and secrecy of their workings.<sup>177</sup> Eschewing simplistic conspiracy theories, such groups were ‘forced to meet and coordinate in order to develop political strategies precisely because they do not control the world’.<sup>178</sup> And, as Stephen Dorril and Robin Ramsay note, ‘A network of people who are, elsewhere, powerful, is *per se* a powerful network’.<sup>179</sup> The notion of policy networks extending beyond national governments and the civil service is important regarding the power and influence of different groups, their interconnections, the dynamic processes of social learning, and how they modified

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175 *Daily Telegraph*, 24 June 2016.

176 The IEA has produced reports calling for, inter alia, a US-UK trade deal that would open up the NHS to US healthcare corporations and deregulate food standards: IEA Brexit Unit Briefing, ‘Much to gain and little to fear from a US-UK trade deal’ (IEA: 12 February 2018); P. Geoghegan and A. Ramsay, ‘Revealed: How the UK’s Powerful Right-Wing Think Tanks and Conservative MPs Work Together’ (31 July 2018), <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/dark-money-investigations/revealed-how-uk-s-powerful-right-wing-think-tanks-and-conse/> (accessed 3 May 2019); *Independent*, 10 February 2016.

177 A. Dur, ‘Measuring Interest Group Influence in the EU: A Note on Methodology’, *European Union Politics* 9:4 (2008), pp. 559-76, at p. 568.

178 D. Plehwe, ‘Introduction’, in Mirowski and Plehwe (eds), *The Road to Mont Pèlerin*, p. 36, fn 12.

179 Dorril and Ramsay, ‘Wilson, MI5 and the Rise of Thatcher’, *Lobster*, p. 24.

their behaviour and practice within such networks.<sup>180</sup> Pluralist approaches assume that power and influence are fragmented and diffuse, with the state as arbiter of competing demands. But an approach that conceives political power as deriving from economic power allows for an analysis of how the interests and policies of groups such as Aims of Industry were incorporated into the policies and actions of the state and organized business. This forms the basis for a historical analysis that goes beyond either a reified focus on the ideological sphere or an overarching emphasis on more observable forms of conflict or organizational activity, assessing the mobilization of forces to implement political programmes.

Aims of Industry was a significant actor within the development of neoliberalism in Britain. Neoliberalism is understood here as a 'hegemonic political-economic project',<sup>181</sup> involving 'the mobilization of state power in the contradictory extension and reproduction of market (-like) rule',<sup>182</sup> in order to implement 'draconian policies designed to restore and consolidate capitalist class power'.<sup>183</sup> Neoliberalism stresses the role of individuals and consumers within a market economy, with workers restricted to taking or leaving jobs subject to 'the authoritative decisions of managers'.<sup>184</sup>

In Britain, neoliberal thinking targeted trade unions as opposing the restructuring of work and industry, and fuelling unemployment by pricing their members out of work. Conservative government policies after 1979 addressed these concerns by constraints on industrial action, and reduced state support for industries where unions were strong.<sup>185</sup> The union-exclusionary consensus within neoliberal ideology had been contested; for example, proponents of the benefits of union-management relations were evident in debates within the Mont Pelerin Society in the 1950s.<sup>186</sup> While

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180 H. Pemberton, 'Policy Networks and Policy Learning: UK Economic Policy in the 1960s and 1970s', *Public Administration (Pub. Admin.)* 78:4 (2000), pp. 771-92.

181 K. Birch and V. Mykhnenko, 'Introduction: A World Turned Right Way Up', in *idem* (eds), *The Rise and Fall of Neoliberalism*, pp. 1-20, at p. 6.

182 A. Tickell and J. Peck, 'Making Global Rules: Globalization or Neoliberalization?', in J. Peck and H. Yeung (eds), *Remaking the Global Economy* (Sage: 2003), p. 166.

183 D. Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crises of Capitalism* (Oxford University Press: 2010), p. 10.

184 B. Jackson, 'Neoliberalism, Labour and Trade Unionism', in S. Springer, K. Birch, and J. Macleavy (eds), *The Handbook of Neoliberalism* (Routledge, Oxford: 2016), pp. 262-70, at p. 268.

185 B. Jackson, 'An Ideology of Class: Neoliberalism and the Trade Unions, 1930-79', in C. Griffiths, J. Nott, and W. Whyte (eds), *Classes, Cultures and Politics: Essays for Ross McKibbin* (Oxford University Press: 2011), pp. 263-81.

186 Y. Steiner, 'The Neoliberals Confront the Trade Unions', in Mirowski and Plehwe (eds), *The Road to Mont Pèlerin*, pp. 181-203.

economistic forms of union organization and quasi-pluralist industrial relations, albeit those that minimized the mobilizing capacity of labour, were tolerated at certain junctures, the neoliberal movement generally framed organized labour as illegitimate. The crises of the 1970s are commonly identified as the historical juncture in which neoliberal ideas and policies grew in prominence, but such ideas were already prevalent within key sections of the business community.<sup>187</sup>

The work of Aims of Industry had been central to challenging the ‘post-war consensus’. While it presented itself as an outsider organization, it had links to elites within politics, business and the media. After Thatcher became Conservative leader in 1975, Aims of Industry, and its network, became influential in providing the context for the radicalization of the Conservative Party’s agenda - privatization and the reform of labour law, including that on trade unions and industrial action. Aims of Industry’s eventual influence on the destructive ‘roll-back’<sup>188</sup> phase of neoliberalism in Britain was significant, especially in propagating such positions among organized business and serving as an interlocutor between the political sphere and industry, a relationship that is often understated in analyses that focus more on governments, policy institutes, and debates within the ideological sphere.

Aims of Industry highlighted a victimhood often associated with what Stuart Hall called ‘authoritarian populism’, where free-market advocates claimed to be persecuted by the establishment, media and unions, with taxpayers exploited, the middle classes suffering from socialist policies, and unions hurting the general public. These themes are promulgated by contemporary organizations such as the TaxPayers’ Alliance, members of which have become Conservative Party advisers and campaigned for Britain to leave the EU. Aims of Industry could be dismissed as insignificant given the difficulty in ‘proving’ its influence. But the financial support received from companies and businessmen, the frequency of its media appearances, embeddedness in right-wing networks, connections with Thatcher and key government figures, and links to international networks of policy institutes,<sup>189</sup> show that it articulated the views of, and was situated within, an economic and political elite. Evaluating Aims of Industry’s high level of ‘preference attainment’<sup>190</sup> in terms of privatization, deregulation,

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187 N. Rollings, ‘Cracks in the Post-War Keynesian Settlement? The Role of Organised Business in Britain in the Rise of Neoliberalism before Margaret Thatcher’, *TCBH* 24:4 (2013), pp. 637-59.

188 J. Peck and A. Tickell, ‘Neoliberalizing Space’, *Antipode* 34:3 (2002), pp. 380-404.

189 From the late 1960s, Aims of Industry developed links with free-market policy institutes in Europe and the US: *The Times*, 25 September 1972.

190 Dur, ‘Measuring Interest Group Influence’, *European Union Politics*, p. 567.

restrictions on unions, and opposition to the EU, demonstrates its significance, although difficult to formally ‘measure’.

In assessing the bodies that constituted the network of right-wing pressure groups, there is a need to compare their type and level of influence. The principal neoliberal policy institutes - the IEA, CPS, and ASI - engaged in more detailed policy work compared to the campaigning, public focus of Aims of Industry. The Economic League, NAFF, and Hart’s activities, concentrated on practical rather than ideological interventions, in particular blacklisting, strikebreaking, and legal challenges, with a direct impact on their ‘targets’. An informal group, the Argonauts, articulated an anti-union agenda and had access to the Thatcher government, which incrementally restricted union power in successive statutes.<sup>191</sup> The connections between Aims of Industry, NAFF, Crozier, and the ISC also links such work to that of the IRD, and of IRIS and TRUEMID, which sought to undermine and defeat left-wing candidates in union elections. Aims of Industry served as a fulcrum within this network, maintaining such arguments in the public sphere, influencing the media and politicians, and drawing in some Labour Party and union figures. Revisionist histories of union leaders such as Chapple neglect the links between some on the right of the Labour movement and those right-wing networks that contributed to weakening organized labour in Britain.<sup>192</sup>

Members of these networks moved into corporatized public relations, lobbying, and policy institutes, where they played a significant part in their development.<sup>193</sup> Newer Conservative-linked organizations such as Policy Exchange and the Centre for Social Justice maintain an important influence on policy. Lobbying on business and environmental regulation and taxation is a more important component of governance processes than ever.<sup>194</sup>

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191 Smith and Morton, ‘The Conservative Governments’ Reform of Employment Law’, *HSIR*.

192 C. Aikman, ‘Frank Chapple: A Thoughtful Trade Union Moderniser’, in P. Ackers and A. Reid (eds), *Alternatives to State Socialism in Britain: Other Worlds of Labour in the Twentieth Century* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke: 2016), pp. 211-42.

193 This included public relations work with some controversial clients. Sherman, for example, advised the Serbian regime during the wars of the 1990s and Bell Pottinger, Tim Bell’s public relations firm, provided advice to numerous troubled corporations, authoritarian regimes, and associated figures. Clients have included the governments (and associated individuals) of Serbia, Sri Lanka, Egypt and Bahrain, Thailand, Belarus and Syria, the Pinochet Foundation, energy firms Cuadrilla and Trafigura, BAE Systems, and former *Sun* editor, Rebekah Brooks: *Guardian*, 9 December 2013.

194 Policy Exchange published a ‘research note’ that was the basis for the Trade Union Act 2016, which introduced high balloting and turnout thresholds with which trade unions had to comply to retain their tort immunity when



There is a danger in privileging the ideological sphere when analysing these networks. Debates on Thatcherism in the 1980s have been divided between those, such as Hall, who emphasized the role of ideology in the development of Thatcherite hegemony,<sup>195</sup> and others, such as Bob Jessop,<sup>196</sup> who emphasized the changing nature of institutions within this project. A synthesis of approaches assists in analysing neoliberalism in the British context.<sup>197</sup> But it is necessary to move beyond the focus on ideological and institutional spheres to understand how projects of class domination, informed by Cold War ideology, led to attacks on organized labour, industrial action, and individual activists blacklisted in this period. Such strategies sought to maintain managerial control over workplace regulation to the benefit of employers.<sup>198</sup> Anti-communist Cold War ideology provided the 'intellectual' justification for such activity, but this endured long after international tensions had formally ended.<sup>199</sup>

Power can be observed in cases where an actor persuades another actor to act in a way it otherwise would not have, and necessitates some acknowledgement of what might have happened without such an intervention.<sup>200</sup> The strengthening of anti-union laws in the 1980s, the consolidation of privatization as a core policy aim of the Conservative Party, and enduring support for anti-EU positions were all advocated by Aims of Industry in this period, either directly or through groups that shared funding sources or key individuals such as Ivens. Aims of Industry was central in providing a platform for such positions before the 1970s when they increasingly gained traction. The 1979 Conservative manifesto made few references to privatization or specific industrial relations reforms but an organized, well-resourced policy network,<sup>201</sup> with close links to political and economic power, was a significant resource for those in the Conservative Party and government developing a neoliberal programme. Aims of Industry was important in linking the organizations and individuals that shaped the policies of the period and ensured they were implemented. Without this pressure there is the possibility that a less radical approach to privatization

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organizing industrial action: A. Bogg, 'Beyond Neo-Liberalism: The Trade Union Act 2016 and the Authoritarian State', *Industrial Law Journal* 45:3 (2016), pp. 299-336.

195 Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal*.

196 Jessop *et al.*, *Thatcherism*.

197 A. Gallas, *The Thatcherite Offensive: A Neo-Poulantzian Analysis* (Haymarket, Chicago: 2016).

198 D. Whyte, 'Policing for Whom?', *Howard Journal* 54:1 (2015), pp. 73-90.

199 E. Herman and N. Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (Pantheon, New York: 2002).

200 S. Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (2nd edn; Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke: 2005), pp. 44-5.

201 Pemberton, 'Policy Networks and Policy Learning', *Pub. Admin.*

and union regulation might have been adopted.<sup>202</sup> The emphasis on networks has an enduring significance within political campaigning, and the use of formally non-party pressure groups that attempt to circumvent electoral finance regulations is a growing feature of elections in Britain, the US and elsewhere.<sup>203</sup>

With legislation to restrict and regulate trade unions, privatization, economic deregulation, the end of the Cold War and receding fears of left-wing subversion, and the rise of New Labour (committed to much of the Thatcherite settlement),<sup>204</sup> Aims of Industry's purpose became unclear. Business proved reluctant to provide funds, hence in the 1990s it withered away. Interventions by Aims of Industry had reinforced exaggerated, sometimes hysterical, fears of domestic subversion among the business community, the police and security services, but its practical activities - election campaigning, influence within specific industrial disputes and the internal politics of unions, and lobbying for the privatization and deregulation of key industries - are often under-acknowledged. These networks, and their ideological, institutional and social impact, were a significant influence on political and economic changes in the late twentieth century and are worthy of greater attention given their enduring legacy.

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202 Hoskyns, *Just in Time*, p. 384.

203 J. Mayer, *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires behind the Rise of the Radical Right* (Doubleday, New York: 2016).

204 Miller, 'How Neoliberalism Got Where It Is', p. 31.