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THE RAILWAY CLERKS' ASSOCIATION, 1919-1939

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## The Railway Clerks' Association 1919 - 1939

### Abstract

This thesis analyses the history of the Railway Clerks' Association between 1919 and 1939. At the beginning of this period the Association was the largest and strongest white-collar trade union in the country; in 1920 it had recruited nearly 90 per cent of the railway white-collar work-force. Although the membership numbers declined after 1920 they soon stabilized at 50 to 60 per cent of its potential membership which was significantly greater than the overall density of trade union membership amongst the male labour force between 1921-1939. At the beginning of the period, in 1919, the Association obtained negotiating recognition from the railway companies. Even so, it continued to use parliamentary methods to influence its members' employers and to sponsor its members as parliamentary candidates: at first to gain parliamentary influence to further its own aims, later to help with the Labour Party's long-term aims. Its best success in this field was in 1929, when eight members of the Association were elected. It called its members out on strike in 1926 - the only white-collar trade union to do this. The response from its membership was not overwhelming, but the importance of this gesture is that it happened and there was a visible response.

After commenting on theories concerning white collar trade unions, the working conditions of railway clerks and the organisation of the Association, the thesis discusses, within the framework of Michels' theory of organisations, selected aspects of the Association's work: wage negotiations, including the negotiations that secured recognition; parliamentary and electoral work; the Association's efforts to persuade

the railway companies to provide better pension funds; its experiences during the General Strike; and how it dealt with internal dissension. The thesis concludes with an assessment of the Association as an example of a white-collar trade union and the level of organization and experience it had achieved by 1939, in relation to the challenge of war and its aftermath that the Association was to face.

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SELECT LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

ASLEF	The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firmen.
ASRS	The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants. (The main precursor of the NUR).
'Association'	In the text of the thesis the RCA is normally referred to as the 'Association'.
BL or BM	Reference for material held at the British Library.
Cd. or Cmd.	Parliamentary paper.
CLC.	Central Labour College.
Conciliation Workers	A railway term for workers who acquired limited negotiating rights in 1907. The grades of workers excluded were clerical and supervisory.
CWB an NWB	Central Wages Board and National Wages Board. The two major tribunals set up as a result of the 1921 Railways Act. Tribunals with the same names and much the same functions were in existence for the conciliation staff from 1920, In 1935, these tribunals were superseded when new negotiating procedures were agreed between the railway trade unions and the railway companies - RSNC and RSNT.
EC	Executive Committee; usually the Association's Executive Committee.
GWR	Great Western Railway Company (the greater part of this company was known by this name before 1921, but it was also one of the four large companies created as a result of the 1921 Railways Act).
ILO	International Labour Organisation.
ITF	International Transport Workers' Federation.
LGOC	London General Omnibus Company, (part of the T.O.T.).
L. & Y.	Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway Company (a pre-grouping company).

LMS. London Midland and Scottish Railway Company. (One of the four railway companies created as a result of the 1921 Railways Act).

LNER London and North-Eastern Railway Company. (Another of the four railway companies created as a result of the 1921 Railways Act).

LNWR London and North-Western Railway Company (a pre-grouping company).

LPTB London Passenger Transport Board. (The body created in 1933 when the intra-urban passenger transport of London was nationalised.)

MSS. 55 and MSS. 55B These are references to the archives of the Association held at the Modern Record Centre at Warwick University.

NALGO National Association of Local Government Officers, later Nationalised and Local Government Officers Association.

NASMY National Association of Station Masters and Yardmasters, previously known as NESMA i.e. North Eastern Station Masters Association.

NCLC Nation Council of Labour Colleges.

NER North Eastern Railway Company (a pre-grouping company).

NUR National Union of Railwaymen. (In the 1990's, known as the RMT).

ORT & E Fund Omnibus, Railway and Equipment Companies Superannuation Fund ( a T.O.T. fund)

PRO Public Record Office.

RCA Railway Clerks' Association, the name the Association was known by from 1898 to 1951. For the first year of its existence (1897) it was called: the National Association of General Railway Clerks.

RCH Railway Clearing House.



REC Railway Executive Committee. The name of the committee of railway managers which administered the railway industry during both world wars

RPI Retail Price Index.

RSNC & RSNT These bodies, the Railway Staff National Council, and the Railway Staff National Tribunal, replaced the CWB and the NWB in the negotiating procedures which were agreed in 1935.

T. & G. Transport and General Workers Union.

T. O. T. Trams, Omnibuses and Tubes - the popular name given to the London Traffic Combine, a group of companies which ran intra-urban transport prior to 1933.

TWF Transport Workers' Federation.

Unappointed clerks Railway clerks not awarded permanent status. They suffered from a number of disadvantages such as not being in the pension fund. Their numbers declined over the period, from 656 in 1927 to 411 in 1938. The Association constantly pressed for their status to be regularised

WEA Workers' Educational Association.

WETUC Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee.

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## Introduction

This thesis deals with the history of the Railway Clerks' Association from 1919 to 1939, henceforward referred to as the 'Association'. It was, and is, a 'white-collar' trade union, now the Transport Salaried Staffs Association. The period is that of the two peacetime decades between the two World Wars, but its boundaries have not been arbitrarily chosen. They were landmarks in the Association's history, in that it achieved employers' recognition as a negotiating body in 1919 and faced new challenges brought by the second World War in 1939.

The Association's inter-war history is presented in terms of five topics that were its major preoccupations: wage negotiations; Parliamentary and electoral activity; the movement to improve pension schemes; the Association's experience of the General Strike; and its response to internal dissension. Although the Association's membership declined from its highest point in 1920, the level it maintained afterwards and its industrial behaviour in general does not accord with the received wisdom to the effect that white-collar workers' loyalties are likely to be divided, in that they have common interests with management that compete with their allegiance to fellow workers. This implies that any unions they may form are likely to be relatively weak and not disposed to militancy.

However, if we consider organisations of clerical workers, and of wage earners of similar occupational status in the early 1920's it is readily apparent that they did not conform to a single stereotype, but rather represented a spectrum of industrial attitudes. Workers in public service employment (such as Civil Service clerks and Post Office employees) did indeed belong to 'no strike' unions, and the 'guilds' of

bank clerks and similar groups were regarded as friendly to management. On the other hand, elementary school teachers, distributive trade workers (including 'high class' shop assistants in the leading departmental stores) and draughtsmen had all by the early 1920's formed unions which had affiliated to the TUC and were willing to prosecute strikes(1).

The Association was not, therefore, unique amongst white collar organisations and the putative social status of its membership was not a particularly relevant factor in explaining its industrial strategy. Rather, explanations for the Association's characteristic behaviour in the period are to be found in attitudes conditioned by its earlier history, the degree of organisation it had achieved by 1919, and the economic context of railway employment between the wars. These factors are specific to the Association and its members' employment.

Although there is a literature on white-collar trade unionism, the generalisations it offers have not proved helpful in explaining the Association's experience. The remainder of this introduction, therefore, begins with a discussion of the limitations of the literature. There follows a summary of the historical background to the Association's character and behaviour at the end of the first World War and after. Finally, the introduction provides notes on the Association's leading personalities of the time, and of the organisational arrangements it had by then established for the conduct of its institutional affairs.

A consideration of the literature on white-collar trade unionism raises the question of the use of social theory in history. Sociologists are concerned with explaining the present and predicting the future - that is, insofar as they seek to establish the social conditions under which particular outcomes are likely. Historians are concerned with exposing and explaining the past. If it is considered that the

present barely exists, that the future is unknowable and that the past is really all we have to go on, then a social scientist needs to be some sort of an historian to gather the material on which to ground and test his or her theories. But what of the theories to be used by historians, for historical explanations?

In practice, much of the theory drawn on by social historians has been developed by sociologists, and is conditioned by their preoccupations with the dynamics of social change. Marxist theory is a major example of one frame of reference through which some sociologists have sought to explain ongoing change, not the same enterprise as the historian's. A difficulty with discussing much of the social theory that has been applied to white-collar unions is that the literature represents a number of theoretical perspectives and two opposed academic traditions: 'Industrial Relations' and 'Sociology'. They do not coexist in harmony, and their criticisms of each other constitute much of the content of their contributions to academic journals(2). But it cannot be dismissed as academic in-fighting of little significance, especially inasmuch as it relates to methodology. Four types of perspective and methods are at issue: the industrial relations approach associated with George Sayers Bain; the empirical sociological one as used by R. M. Blackburn and Kenneth Prandy; the neo-Weberian approach of which David Lockwood's work is a seminal example; and the structural-Marxist perspective(3). This last is represented by a number of analysts in different countries: Rosemary Crompton, Harry Braverman and Nicos Poulantzas have been principal exponents.

The work of both Lockwood and Bain covers the relevant period, and might be expected to be particularly pertinent to this study. Lockwood's starting-point was what he described as clerical workers' 'lukewarm' reaction to trade unionism, at least until the outbreak of the

second World War(4). He explained it by way of a more refined account of social structure than that which accords a common proletarian identity to workers who share the same market situation, regardless of the type of work they do. By taking account of particular market factors that are significant for the different types of work even though the market situation may be undifferentiated at a very general level, of particularities about workplace situations and relationships that govern the different workers' daily experience, and of the 'status' dimension of socio-economic placings, Lockwood disposes of the argument that clerical workers' low level of trade union activity is the product of 'false consciousness'. The Association in the 1920s and 1930s did not fit Lockwood's stereotype and, indeed, he acknowledged that there are atypical examples(5). They do not necessarily invalidate his argument, since they may be attributable to differences in the factors that he cited as relevant to his refined analysis of class-consciousness. That is, the Association may have been an atypical union because its members' market situation and workplace experiences were also atypical of clerical workers in general. An important question that follows is to do with the concept of typicality: on detailed examination, how much common experience is there within clerical work as a whole? Lockwood offered his work as 'a preliminary statement', acknowledging the need for more data: (6) the relevance of the Association's experience is less as a test of his theory or something to be explained by it than as an extension of the information that can be brought to bear on it.

Bain's comprehensive study of the growth of white-collar unionism is an especially useful reference, but its conclusions have little application to the case of the Association. His discussion of conceptual considerations covers the problem of producing satisfactory definitions of 'white-collar workers' and their 'trade unions'. The Association

comes well within his terms, as an organisation of clerical employees defined as a trade union for the purposes of the Department of Employment. His tabulation of white-collar unions affiliated to the Trades Union Congress after 1948 divides them into 'purely' and 'partially' white-collar; the Transport Salaried Staffs Association is in the first group(7). Bain amasses much well-organised empirical data that is of great value, especially for comparisons, but his conclusion that job-regulation is the only variable factor that significantly affects trade union activity is contestable, as unacceptably schematic and over-restrictive(8). However, his work is addressed to factors influencing trade union growth; as the Association's inter-war experience was essentially one of consolidation it cannot appropriately be adduced in relation to Bain's conclusions and there is no profit in pursuing a critique of the conclusions for its own sake.

The method represented in the work of Blackburn and Prandy might be called 'nuts and bolts' sociology. It entails distributing questionnaires, tabulating the responses and using sophisticated mathematical techniques to analyse the results. One difference between this method and Bain's is that Bain has used published data, whereas Blackburn and Prandy undertake their own investigations. Despite these differences of methodology, Bain and others of the 'Industrial Relations' school might be expected to see Blackburn and Prandy's work as being generally aligned with their perspective; on the contrary, they are highly critical. Surprisingly, sociologists who leap to Blackburn's and Prandy's defence include some whose perspectives and methods are quite different. In fact, Crompton's article in a reader edited by Richard Hyman and Robert Price contains a rejoinder to criticism of Blackburn and Prandy by Bain(9). In that it deals with the present, Blackburn and Prandy's work is too distant from the 1920s and 1930s to be relevant to



the present study.

The Marxist-derived theories also have little to offer, for reasons succinctly expressed by C. Smith:

"The Marxist approach to the current debate on the new middle class has unfortunately been wholly associated with continental structuralism. This approach is antithetical to empirical investigation and history, and although it constantly stresses the central place of class struggle for class analysis it effectively subordinates class consciousness, experience and action to absolute theoretical structures. If empirical reality and history are ignored then the 'testing' of theory becomes an exercise in philosophical rationalism" (10).

What is important for present, practical purposes is that sociologists' developments of Marxist theory may have little application to historians' different problems. Past social changes may not have been of a kind that Marx predicted, and may also display more complexity than Marxist theory can accommodate.

There is one theoretical perspective, of a different order to those discussed so far, that has proved valuable: the organisational theory developed by Robert Michels. His major work, *Political Parties*, was published in 1911, translated into English in 1915, and has been republished many times since (11). The reason for this continuing interest is that the theory has a tenable explanation for the weakness of democratic procedures that is apparent in most of the organised voluntary groups which use them. Michels called his theory 'The Iron Law of Oligarchy', and formulated it as follows: 'It is organisation which gives birth to the dominion of the elected over the electors, of the mandatories over the mandators, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organisation says oligarchy' (12). In more straightforward terms, in any organisation which has elected officers with any element of power, the officers will employ all sorts of practices, fair and unfair, to stay elected.

The first thing to say about this profoundly cynical appraisal of voluntary organisations is that it was not written by a 'business union' cynic who considered that trade unions have adjusted sensibly to the norms of our 'pluralistic', capitalist society and a good thing too. Prior to writing *Political Parties*, Michels was active in left-wing politics and had been black-listed by universities in his native Germany(13). His intention certainly was not to exult that workers, or anyone else for that matter, could not set up truly democratic institutions, but rather to warn us not to set our expectations too high - and 'too high' is extremely low.

Michels' theory was put to the test in the 1950s by the American sociologist, S. M. Lipset, and his colleagues(14). The International Typographical Union appeared to be unique in having evolved internal political parties which vied with each other for power in the union. Over the years, the union administration had been controlled by one or other of these parties, which had no links with the national political parties. Their interest was solely in internal union affairs. The union members' work was to set type in the printing workshops of North America. It is not too difficult to see how such a party system could have arisen amongst such workers(15), spread over such a large area. Despite the evidence that the union had a form of vibrant democracy, Lipset took the view that the special circumstances which made it unique meant that it was of little use as a model for democratic organisation in other unions. He concluded that, for most organisations, Michels' theory was still valid. (There was also some suggestion that the union's preoccupation with its internal politics was dysfunctional for the efficient prosecution of union business).

For present purposes, the theoretical perspectives raised here have been considered only instrumentally, in relation to their potential for

illuminating a particular white-collar union's affairs at a particular time. From this point of view, sociological theories are intellectual constructs, amongst others, to be applied insofar as they seem likely to advance historical understanding. Michels seems to offer the most useful theoretical perspective even though, unlike E.M. Forster, he would not have given even one cheer for democracy(16). It is not claimed that his perspective offers an over-arching explanation for the whole of the Association's inter-war experience and behaviour, only that it is enlightening about some important aspects of them. It is the general category of 'middle-range' and 'low level' theory that, it is here argued, is best suited for application to the union's affairs, rather than 'grand' theory which might claim to provide an account of the role of unions in general, and white-collar unions in particular, within society at large. This is not to say that either this thesis or its author's interests are narrowly institutional. Rather, the argument is that there is at present neither a sufficiently developed body of 'grand theory' nor one of empirical data on trade union activity for the thesis usefully to address 'grand' issues. This is a reflection on the 'state of the art'; work of the order of this thesis is part of the enterprise of establishing a body of data which can offer some limited suggestions about explaining social affairs, and may in future be part of the grounds for more extensive theoretical propositions.

Turning to the subject-matter of the thesis itself, it is necessary to establish something of the historical background to its account of the Association. Founded in 1897, the Association became a different kind of union in 1919 and dealt with a different kind of employer from 1939. The change in 1919 was a consequence of its recognition for negotiating purposes; that of 1939 was due to the Government's taking control of the railways for the duration of the war and nationalising them afterwards.

The Government had also controlled the railways during the first World War but had then returned them to the private sector, reorganised into four large companies; there had formerly been over a hundred.

In 1919, the Association negotiated what turned out to be a good pay settlement. It was able to do so not because the railway managements were particularly weak or the Association particularly strong, but because inflation and living costs were unprecedentedly high. The cost of living began to decline within a couple of years and was never again to reach the same heights between the wars. As a consequence of the settlement of 1919, railway clerks enjoyed pay that was better than male workers' average earnings for most of their working lives(17). The settlement included a sliding-scale element, prudently negotiated by the railway managements to gear pay to expected reductions in living costs, but they were greater than had been allowed for and the effect of the sliding scale was limited. Later on, the employers made wage cuts, but further falls in the cost of living cushioned railway clerks from their full impact(18).

Comparatively high pay was not the only economic advantage that railway clerks enjoyed. During the 1920s and 1930s, when many sections of the British work-force suffered high levels of chronic unemployment, the railway workforce, and especially the clerks, had the benefit of much lower levels(19). Finally, the railway white-collar workforce was overwhelmingly male, (20) not threatened by recent and contemporary trends for clerical work to be identified as 'women's work', and priced accordingly. Although there were women clerks they did not infiltrate the workforce enough to change its essentially male character. Railway clerks' relatively high level of trade union activity between the wars cannot be explained in terms of embattlement against perceived threats to their economic status and security. In part, its explanation lies in

their Association's recent history, and their own involvement in it.

One factor that favoured a more militant attitude than might have been expected in white-collar workers is that railway clerks were poorly paid before the first World War, both relative to other workers and by reference to the cost of living. The period from 1900 to 1914 was one of inflation, mild in comparison to such rates as have been experienced in the latter part of the present century, but severe in terms of prevailing, low levels of cash wages, (21) very vulnerable to small increases in inflation. Railway clerks' pay varied from £78 8s 0d a year with the Great Central Railway Company to £108 11s 0d for the London and South Western Railway Company (22). In 1910 the British Association published figures that the Railway Clerks' Association - always keen to demonstrate its members' unfavourable position relative to other white-collar workers' - seized on eagerly and disseminated widely (23).

Reproduced at Appendix IV, they give the proportions of non-manual workers in various industries whose annual pay exceeded £160. Only 10.34 per cent of 'railway clerks and officers' were represented, as against a range of 22.22 per cent to 46.15 per cent for the other eight categories of workers in the schedule.

The railway companies not only paid their employees badly, but also treated them high-handedly. They justified their attitude by reference to a theory that railway operations needed a mode of military discipline (24). They disapproved of trade union activity, especially for white-collar grades. Occasionally, the Association asked Labour Members of Parliament to put pressure on railway managements to moderate their behaviour: there was scope for Parliamentary action insofar as railway development entails the frequent passage of private Acts of Parliament, which can be obstructed (25).

These were the main conditions under which the Association became

comparatively militant in its early, formative years. They need to be highlighted at this point, to support the argument that the Association's behaviour when its members became relatively prosperous can to some extent be explained in terms of attitudes carried over from recent, harder times. It is better understood in the context of the following sketch of the Association's development before and during the first World War. The Association's continuous history dates from May 1897, and has been investigated by Adrian Tranter, whose work should be referred to for a fuller account of the early period(26).

The railway industry has two types of white-collar workers: those who work on stations, in goods yard and in train depots, and clerks who work in what used to be known as 'managerial offices' (27). The working conditions of 'station clerks' were peculiar to the railways; 'managerial clerks' had a work experience more like the general run of office work. Prior to the first World War, when the Association's membership was low, its Executive Committee reported difficulty in recruiting clerks in 'managerial offices' (28), implying that 'station clerks' were easier to recruit. This is not surprising, in view of railway operational staff's unusual working conditions. Their small work-groups, employed several miles apart and scattered over the country, consisted of majorities of manual workers and smaller numbers of white-collar workers(29). In such small, semi-closed communities the manual workers might have been expected to have a strong influence on the white-collar workers embedded in their midst(30). It should be noted that G. S. Bain, whose work has already been cited, has resisted other writers' observations that white-collar workers are more likely to join unions if they work in close proximity to unionised manual workers(31). On the other hand, as has been suggested in this introduction's discussion of Lockwood's work, the limitations of white-collar unions' recorded

histories mean that all generalisations about them must be treated with reserve.

Before the first World War, the manual workers' union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) (32) had a number of 'all-grade movements'. This term was used for periods of planned industrial activity, which included recruiting campaigns and attempts to obtain improved pay and conditions for all the union's members. They were so-named because the railway companies attempted to weaken the industrial weight of their work-force by insisting on separate negotiations for each grade of staff. 'All-grade movements' dated back to the 1880s (33), but the two that are important for the present argument occurred in 1907 and in 1911. The movement of 1907 led to the first conciliation scheme, that is, a rather limited system of negotiating rights. Only railway manual workers obtained these rights, clerical and administrative staff were excluded; the 'all-grades movement' of 1911 culminated in the first national railway strike (34). Railway clerks were not directly involved in either, but the increased industrial activity appears to have improved recruitment for their Association, very likely because most of its potential members were 'station clerks' (35); see Table 1.

Table 1

Railway Clerks' Association: Membership Statistics.

Year	Branches	Membership
1903	53	4,034
1904	59	4,666
1905	67	4,129
1906	86	6,277
1907	120	10,114
1908	114	8,043
1909	124	8,457
1910	132	9,476
1911	173	16,903
1912	191	19,151
1913	212	25,791
1914	233	29,394

(Sources: TSSA Annual Report, 1976; MSS.55B/1/EC/16/5863)

This table shows that the Association at first could not maintain a stable growth. Its establishment of a man and boy in Doncaster (36) had not been able to maintain the membership of four-and-a-half thousand recruited by the end of 1904 so it is not surprising that the momentum of the 1907 surge could not be sustained. By 1911, the Association had a London office and a full-time staff that held on to the increased membership and systematically built up from it. Increased membership means an increase in subscription revenue, so more full-time workers can be employed and more members serviced. A launching-pad of resources had to be established for the increased membership to be consolidated as the base for further progress.

In March 1914 the Association's head office in London was completely reorganised, not because its Executive foresaw the opportunities for



recruitment that the War would bring, but in consequence of its recent purge of syndicalists, including an assistant secretary(37). The Association's subscription income of £1,000 per month could support a fairly large head office establishment: (38) General Secretary, Chief Assistant Secretary, 3 Assistant Secretaries, 3 Leading Clerks, 4 Boy Clerks and Messengers(39).

This well-ordered establishment enabled the Association to take full advantage of the general increase in trade union membership, a feature of both World Wars which, for the first, was sustained until the long and painful period of inter-war unemployment began in 1921(40). The Association's membership then stood at 87,054(41) which, taking the Association's own estimate of its constituency as 100,000(42), was very close to a density of 90 per cent. It was not able to sustain this membership; in 1921 it was 60,264, and the following year(1922), 51,367. The decline was thought to have been caused by a doubling of the membership subscription, and when, three rates were introduced in 1923, membership rose again until 1925, when it was 66,130. Every union which took part in the General Strike lost members; by 1927 the Association's membership was down to 50,208. Unlike other unions, the Association mounted a campaign to increase its membership and it continued to rise until the beginning of the War in 1939, when it stood at 64,389(43)

Before the first World War, the Association was generally considered to be a non-striking trade union(44). This characteristic seems to have been less a matter of principle than of circumstance. As long as the Association recruited only a small proportion of potential members, the leadership appears to have considered that its scope for industrial militancy was limited. The Association was, of course, also concentrating its energy on increasing the size and scope of its organisation. When its size became significant and the end of the War

looked like bringing new and apparently intractable difficulties, the Executive began to think that a more militant policy was indicated. In 1915 it was decided to increase members' subscriptions by over 180 per cent, to create a strike fund(45).

It must be emphasised that the militancy which was proposed was industrial, rather than political, and the distinction is between the different ends - that is, political or industrial-to which militancy might be addressed; it can be characterised as 'Labourist'. Excursions into activity not approved by the Labour Party or the Trades Union Congress (TUC) would not have been entertained as Association policy. Here are three examples from 1919 when, by common consent, working-class militancy was exceptionally high(46). First, the Executive would not agree to call a one-day strike to mark May-day(47); second, when Goole branch asked if the Association was joining in the strike on 1 August that was called to protest against conscription and secret war documents, the Executive said it was not(48); and third, when London Bridge Head Office branch asked if the Association supported the 'Hands off Russia' strike on July 20th and 21st, the Executive replied that as it was not yet Labour Party policy, neither was it the Association's(49). These examples illustrate the Association's political and industrial stance in 1919; they need to be considered in relation to its decision-making structures and personnel.

The General Secretary over practically the whole period covered by this thesis was A. G. Walkden, later Lord Walkden, who took office in 1906 at the age of thirty three(50). The Association's establishment on the eve of the first World War, with its secretaries, clerks and messengers, shows that Walkden had by then instituted an orthodox administrative hierarchy for conducting the Association's business; one of its members deserves special attention. This was George Lathan, born

in 1875 and almost Walkden's exact contemporary(51). The two men worked amicably for twenty five years with Lathan never allying himself with the 'palace revolts' that happened from time to time.

The Association's formal organisation consisted of five elements, as it still does: branch, annual conference (or special delegate conference), executive committee, general secretary and head office, and divisional councils.

The basic element is the Branch. Every member must belong to one, and only a branch can send delegates and resolutions to an annual or special delegate conferences.

Since the end of the first World War the Annual Conference has met for a week in mid-May, at a seaside resort; conferences were formerly in inland cities. Special Delegate Conferences can be called at any time by the Executive Committee or a substantial number of branches. In practice, they have been called by the Executive to demonstrate what backing there has been for a strike or a wage demand, or to discuss an important topic which has just arisen. Delegate conferences, and most particularly the Annual Conference, are the Association's supreme formal authority, but the evidence suggests that, in practice, much power resides in informal procedures .

The Executive Committee is elected by regions, into which the branches are organised. It is empowered to take all important decisions, including decisions on strike action, but it usually calls a delegate conference if it needs to assess membership support. It usually meets once a month, but may meet more frequently if occasion demands.

The General Secretary is appointed by the Annual Conference, usually for the rest of his working life. He is the most important official of the Association, and has the right to speak at any of its conferences and

at the Executive Committee, but he has no vote. He is supported by the staff of the Association's head office, which is under his control.

The foregoing arrangements all date from the Association's foundation, but divisional councils came later. Their boundaries are coterminous with the regions and their function is to supervise the branches in the regions, concentrating on any that seem to be falling apart, or have a number of members who are in arrears with their subscriptions, or are backsliding in any other way. They are supposed to meet only two or three times a year, but may set up special sub-committees that meet more often. Their powers do not override those of the branches, and they have to be careful not to duplicate the branches' functions. For example, they may not take up a position on resolutions to Annual Conferences. This particular issue was settled in 1925, when Maidenhead Branch wanted to submit a resolution to Annual Conference which criticized the General Secretary and which the North-West London Divisional Council wanted to support. It was told that it had no powers to do so(52).

Although the Annual Conference is in theory the supreme authority, there have been occasions when one has passed a resolution which the Executive and General Secretary have circumvented. As implementation is up to them, it is possible for them to subvert the will of the Annual Conference by delay. A year's procrastination can result in the contentious resolution being overturned at the next Annual Conference. A group that is in session throughout the year can frustrate the wishes of a body that meets only once a year no matter what is the formal relationship between them.

A good example is the way workers' education was handled in the early 1920's; it is discussed in Chapter 6. In short, it began with a resolution of the Annual Conference of 1920 in connection with a

particular educational organisation; the Executive Committee continued to support a rival organisation and did not implement the resolution of 1920, which was negated two years later at another conference mainly because the Executive managed to muddy the water. Resolutions aligned with that of 1920 continued to be submitted to conferences for several years after 1922.

If real power does not lie with the Annual Conference, does the Executive Committee make all the binding decisions? On the whole it does, but there are occasions when a sizeable minority on the Executive has to be circumvented. There was such an occasion at the beginning of the first World War, when a strong faction in the Labour Movement disapproved of the War, whilst there was also great enthusiasm for it that represented much working-class feeling(53). The Association was as subject to this dissension as was any other institution that reflected different tendencies in the Labour Movement. The General Secretary discovered that the wartime organisation of the railways would mean limited recognition for the Association, but he also appears to have been an initial 'War enthusiast'. War was declared on 4 August 1914, but there was no wartime meeting of the Association's Executive until the 19th September; there had been a conference of white-collar workers a week earlier. The members of the Executive who opposed the War found themselves in a minority; their valid complaints that, contrary to Association policy, members were being encouraged to do other people's work, that the General Secretary had worked with Conservatives in recruiting campaigns, and that an emergency executive committee meeting should have been called all found little support. The General Secretary said he had worked all the time in consultation with the President and the Treasurer(54). So, perhaps this is all that is needed to run the Association for a while. Eventually there has to be a meeting of the

Executive, but the control exercised by those in authority, including the permanent officials, may ensure that its timing is the most propitious for their own purposes. The 'anti-war' minority on the Association's Executive had weakened somewhat by mid-September of 1914.

The instances cited here are not claimed to be typical of behaviour in the Association; but they illustrate how its formally democratic structures and procedures could be manipulated. At the same time, they also illustrate how the Association moved into the inter-war period with a well-established organisational structure, and a sound administration controlled by an experienced and respected General Secretary under whose leadership it had recruited an impressively large membership, perhaps the highest proportion of its possible constituency that could ever have been hoped for. If there was to be militancy, the organisational conditions for it could not have been better.

Militancy is a portmanteau term which we need to unpack. It can refer both to a willingness to use strike action in the normal course of industrial relations and the resort to strike action for political reasons. In the immediate post-war period the Labour Movement evinced both types of militancy and both were evident in the ranks of the Association. Political militancy had not been unknown before the first World War - there had been a minority of industrial syndicalists associated with the Sheffield branch - and what was novel about the situation at the end of the War was a widespread rank and file willingness to strike in pursuit of wage claims or for other industrial reasons (such as trade union recognition). During the onset of the 1921 depression, many members - it would appear - became more reluctant to strike, and the Association's Executive seemed to be out of step with this new-found caution of the membership. While the E.C. remained relatively industrially militant, its political moderation (and its

unwillingness to contemplate strikes for political ends) were unquestioned. As we shall see, it successfully deflected a move on the part of a majority of conference delegates to sponsor a scholarship at the Marxist Central Labour College.

The Association's response to post-war conditions will be examined in the context of managements' parallel responses. On the one hand was the new disposition towards militancy, supported by a high level of organisation and official recognition; on the other, relative economic security and the likely concomitant impulse to conserve what was gained, to trim and conciliate, with the object-lessons of other workers' misfortunes ever present. In the event, the Association presents a case study of a trade union which, for a time, had an executive more militant than its members(55): perhaps an unusual circumstance but one that is not necessarily unique, and worth examining for the light it may throw on theories, generalisations and received opinion about the behaviour of organised labour.

## Chapter 1

### WORKING CONDITIONS and NEGOTIATING MACHINERY: the BACKGROUND

This chapter outlines the background to the Association's activities between the wars; its members' working conditions, and the negotiating machinery that was set up at the beginning of the period. Conditions will first be examined as they were prior to the first World War, when there were over a hundred railway companies, although only a dozen or so were important; conditions in 1919 were much as they had been since the turn of the century. Changes that occurred in 1919-1920 will then be considered, under three headings: pay, working hours and working accommodation. The chapter ends with an account of the Railway Act of 1921, which sets the scene for the rest of the period.

#### Working Conditions before 1914

Although there were a number of railway companies, there was little difference between them in the way they treated their clerks. As the table at Appendix IV shows, by comparison with clerks in commerce, the professions and government railway clerks were badly paid, although their salaries were, probably, comparable to clerks<sup>, pay</sup> in manufacturing industry(1). Whereas between 22 and 47 per cent of eight other categories of clerks earned over £160 a year, only 10.34 per cent of railway clerks did so - and for the purposes of the table they include



chief and district officers and stationmasters(2). Thousands stayed on £80 for years. The North-Eastern, in 1905, paid sixty-two per cent of its total salaried staff less than £100 and ninety-five per cent less than £200(3). These rates were increased during 1910 -1912, but only to deal with the inflation of that period. During the War there were periodic war bonuses to cope with wartime inflation, but the basic wage remained the same.

This was the generality, but there were two groups of clerks whose lots were different: one was better, the other was worse. Operating clerks - telegraph clerks, booking clerks and other clerks working at stations and depots - had worse conditions. Their pay was at the lower end, about £95-£100, and they had to work longer hours to earn it, usually a ten-hour day. But they often worked longer unpaid overtime and they worked alternate Sundays. The other group worked normal office hours (rather longer than office hours in general) and were better paid than most railway clerks. Some were better paid than other commercial clerks. These were clerks who worked in central London, where there was competition for clerical labour. The Railway Clearing House near Euston station was one of the largest railway offices, before the first World War. Although the earnings of most of the clerks there were also in the low range (£90-£100), a few reached £200 and four heads of department were paid £450(4).

As to working hours, the main divide was between operating clerks and the others. As explained above, operating or station clerks worked the longest hours(5). Other clerks worked a fortyeight-hour week, sometimes with Saturday as a half-day but normally with no work on Sundays. One of the first campaigns undertaken by the Association was for clerks to be paid extra for Sunday work and for overtime. It had some success(6).

Railway Clearing House Clerks were paid for their periodic overtime, but not as a right; the Clearing House usually decided to grant it as a favour. In 1862, for example, a rate of 8d per hour had been granted: more than the rate paid to junior clerks, but less than that paid to other clerks(7).

Operating clerks had twelve days' paid holiday and Clearing House clerks had a fortnight. ~~As~~ Bagwell has said, "there is no indication in the records as to whether they were paid for those weeks of absence", but other evidence suggests the clerks had some pay for sick leave and holidays(8).

Before the first World War, railway office accommodation was considered poor(9). The majority of railway buildings had been erected in the middle of the nineteenth century when most of the expansion of the railway system took place. In 1911, the Association sponsored a Railway Offices Bill. It received a first reading, but appears to have proceeded no further(10). Its interest is that the reforms it proposed are so modest that existing conditions must have been very poor indeed. The aspects it was hoped to reform were: first, appearance and sanitary condition of offices; second, overcrowding; and third, better provision of washing places and lavatories.

Among the suggestions under the first were that if an office had not been painted within seven years it should be white-washed and that floors and windows should be thoroughly cleaned every seven days. Under the second, three types of office were considered:

(a) only occupied during the daytime hours; for these it suggested that the minimum accommodation should be 800 cubic feet per person;

(b) occupied continuously both day and night; here the minimum suggested figure was 1,600 cubic feet;

(c) underground offices; here the suggested minimum was 2000 cubic feet.

These are modest standards and railway offices must have been overcrowded if they represented improvements. It was also suggested that all underground offices should be closed by 1 January 1915. The better provision of lavatories and washplaces were specified as one of each for every 25 people working or in attendance at any office.

### The End of the War and Real Improvements

This chapter's introductory summary of working conditions up to the end of the first World War has been presented to illustrate how drastic were the improvements which came after.

The first was at the beginning of 1919. The other railway trade unions - the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) had been pressing for a shorter working day for a number of years. As the War reached its end, they began to use a new argument: when the enormous body of armed forces which had been created during the War was demobilised there would be widespread unemployment if no special provisions were made for ex-servicemen's absorption into civilian life. One way to make some room for them would be to reduce the working day. Nobody on the government or the managerial side of the fence appears to have used this argument, but there was general concern about the effects of demobilisation(11). In the event, the reform that the trade unions had been urging, at least since 1890, became widespread throughout industry during 1919(12). For the railways, an agreement was signed that an eight-hour day should come

into operation on 1 February 1919(13). This had an immediate effect on 'station' clerks' conditions, but little or none on those of clerks in other offices that the Association called 'managerial offices'.

A general note should be entered here. Prior to the first World War, negotiation between workers and management were conducted on a company basis, but the War Bonus negotiations followed the railways' wartime nationalisation and covered the whole industry. This industry-wide basis was used for all subsequent negotiations.

The effect of postwar changes in clerks' hours is clearer from the 'Memorandum of Agreement' which was published on March 1st, 1920(14). From that date, clerks working a day which fell between 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. would work five long days and one half day; their total rostered hours would be 48. Station clerks were to have an eight-hour day and a 48-hour week, with no rest day during the week and a quota of Sundays depending upon the station where they worked. One group of clerks did have a set rest day: those on continuous night duty, who were to have a day off in every ten, as far as possible. If nobody could be found to work that night, they were to have an extra day's pay. So a night clerk could work continuously, but would have the compensation of an extra day's pay for every ten worked.

#### Post-War Pay

The post-war pay agreement is also detailed in the Memorandum. There was now a set payment for Sunday work and overtime. Work on a Sunday was to be paid at the rate for an ordinary day plus two thirds of that rate. Overtime was to be paid at the ordinary rate plus a half.

There were six classes of clerk; 57.2 per cent of clerks were in

the lowest, Class V(15). Their pay varied from £80 per annum at the age of 18 to £200 on reaching 31. For the four grades of clerk above class V there were successive increases, with maximum pay at £350 in Class I. A few clerks - 2.6 per cent - were classed as 'Special Grade' and earned more than £350.

This was a better deal, even for Class V clerks, than had been envisaged; a more detailed account is provided in Chapter 2, on wage negotiations. Class V clerks had only to progress a little up their age scale to earn more than the average manual wage. Added to that, the agreement was made at a time of high inflation and within eighteen months the cost of living dropped considerably, enhancing the real value of the pay increases. At the same time unemployment rose to over a million and stayed at that level or higher for the whole of the interwar period. There was little unemployment amongst railway clerks.

In a period of high unemployment, anyone in a secure job with a slightly better than average pay is in a strong economic position. Railway clerks were not prosperous between the wars, but their relative economic position was better than it had ever been before.

#### Working Accommodation

The improvement of offices and the erection of new buildings are likely to be more onerous undertakings than the improvement of wages and the lessening of the working day, and the railway companies were financially stretched. Between the wars they undertook only such building work as was considered to be absolutely necessary to ensure efficient working and keep within their legal constraints. During the

1930s, money did become available to the railway companies for capital work, although the bulk of it was taken up by the Southern Railway for its electrification scheme(16). However, judging by the present appearance of the stations affected by this scheme it involved a considerable amount of rebuilding. Victorian buildings must by this time have been presenting problems for efficient working and the railway managers may have favoured their rebuilding on these grounds alone. A number of government policies pushed money in the railway's direction and are likely to have influenced decisions to rebuild. In particular, one result of the Local Government Act of 1929 was that the railways did not need to pay such a large sum in rates (17), and rearmament in the late 1930s meant extra revenue.

#### The 1921 Railway Act

During 1919, railway clerks' hours and pay were improved, but they had to wait until the 1921 Railway Act for negotiating rights. Previously, they had no such rights, only privileges grudgingly granted.

Prior to the war, the only representative positions generally available for railway clerks were as staff representatives on pension funds. Some companies had "conciliation boards and similar conferences" (18) which catered for railway clerks, but they appear to have been very limited and local. By the start of the War, Association members held most of the staff positions available in connection with pension funds, but if railway clerks wanted their pay or conditions improved they could only ask the railway management to receive a deputation. Trade union officials could not be on such deputations; they could only stay on hand to advise the delegates outside their meetings with railway managers(19).

The 1921 Railway Act changed this, but also had other far-reaching consequences for industrial relations in the railway industry. At the end of the first World War, many members of the coalition government which was then in power had been converted to the idea that government control of the railway system should continue into peacetime(20). The railway system had been taken over at the beginning of the War and it was difficult to see how the ensuing reorganisation could be unscrambled into the original hundred or so pre-war companies. The statutory instrument that was meant to nationalise the railways and other national utilities was the Ministry of Transport Bill of 1919(21), which, as presented, included powers for the Minister to nationalise a transport undertaking simply by an 'order in Council'. This power, amongst important others, was lost during the bill's five-and-a-half months in the House of Commons. The explanation seems to be that whilst the wartime coalition government was not averse to collectivist policy in the interests of efficiency, the mainly Conservative House of Commons elected after the war would brook no such thing as the nationalisation of a transport undertaking (22). After the emasculation of the Ministry of Transport Act, the 1921 Railway Act could not go beyond reorganizing the railway industry (23).

Under that Act, Great Britain's many railway companies were reorganised into four large ones (24). This was about as much disaggregation as was compatible with the railways' continued efficiency, after the thorough-going wartime reorganization.

The main burden of the Act, a feature which was to bedevil the economy of the railway industry for years, was its assumption that the industry would keep its virtual monopoly of long-distance carriage. Instead, the

railways suffered from strong competition from road haulage and some of the Act's provisions hindered the industry's efforts to achieve economic viability. This was important for the Association, because inefficiency in the industry could mean reduced pay for the Association's members or even their dismissal. However, although this aspect of the Act was important in conditioning the climate for subsequent negotiations, what was of immediate and different practical importance were the negotiating rights and other workers' rights bestowed by the Act. They are to be found in the third schedule and also in the fourth part of the Act.

Reorganizing a hundred or more companies into four large ones may not affect many workers who remain at the same locations doing the work they have always done, but others - some senior and some not - will suffer much disruption and even risk dismissal, regardless of their good employment records. Such employees' rights were protected under the third schedule of the Railway Act.

This schedule was not in the first draft of the Bill. It was devised by three representatives of the Association's interests: its solicitor W.R. Southeard; W. Graham, whose services as an M.P. it retained; and its Chief Assistant Secretary, G. Lathan. They persuaded the Government to incorporate it into the Act(25); this was possible because there was a certain amount of 'horse-trading' at one stage of its passage through Parliament. The Government wanted worker-directors included on the boards of the new companies, but neither the railway managers nor the railway trade unions wanted them. In return for the unions agreeing to combine with them in resisting the idea of worker-directors the railway managers accepted the machinery of negotiation in the fourth part of the Act and the third schedule(26).

After the amalgamation of railway companies, Lathan looked after the



interests of members of the Association who experienced problems arising from the Act. With his special knowledge of the third schedule, he was able to handle them successfully over a number of years(27).

The Machinery of Negotiation was based on a system which had been in use for some years by manual railway workers, so it was not completely untried. As can be seen from Appendix V, it was a hierarchical system with five levels, representing different levels of complexity and importance. For example, wage claims for the whole of the railway workforce were generally taken to the Central Wages Board. When - as was most likely - a claim could not be settled it would be passed on to the National Wages Board. This illustrates two functions of the hierarchy; it provided for the level at which negotiations should start on any issue, and also for the transmission upwards should the issue not be settled at the lower level. In theory, a minor matter introduced at a Local Departmental Committee might, because of disagreements, find its way up to the National Wages Board, although that would be very unlikely. Two other points about this machinery of negotiation should be mentioned. One is that the chairman of the National Wages Board was nominated by the Minister of Labour(28) and was usually a distinguished lawyer. The first one was Sir William Mackenzie; the account in Chapter 2 notes how he was called in to arbitrate on two points of dispute between the Association and the employers, the first one before the Association had any formal negotiating machinery to use(29).

The other point is that there were five sectional councils for the five main groups of railway workers. This was not a simple 'divide-and-rule' policy. Different groups were acknowledged to have different kinds of problems; engine-drivers' problems, for example, are different to those of clerks. Different groups' problems may be capable of

settlement at a low and specialized level only to be passed on if settlement is not achieved or if the problems are found to have a wider applicability.

### Conclusion

This chapter has presented the conditions of railway clerks' work prior to the first World War and immediately after it. During the War, their conditions altered very little. Their pay had risen as a result of the 'war bonus' introduced in response to wartime inflation, but it was intended only as a temporary expedient and may even have tended to lag behind increases in living costs. The year 1919 was crucial for railway clerks. Some of them got a shorter working day, there was recognition for their trade union and a moderately reasonable pay agreement. The 1921 Railway Act gave them their first negotiating rights, but it saddled their employers with out-of-date regulations which limited their ability to compete with other forms of long distance transport.

## Chapter 2

### WAGE NEGOTIATIONS 1919 - 1939

#### Introduction

The Association could never have maintained its membership had it not devoted a large part of its resources to improving and defending members' pay. Prior to the first World War, the Association's experience of wage negotiations was all gained at one remove, in advising deputations of members representing their own interests to employers; once the war was over and the Association had obtained recognition, it negotiated at first hand. And, as things turned out, negotiations were continuous until the outbreak of the second World War. The Association's other preoccupations were always pursued against a background of ongoing wage negotiations.

As far as wages were concerned, the interwar decades fell into three distinct periods for the Association. An immediate postwar phase, ending in the third quarter of 1920, was productive for improvement in pay, but was followed by a long period, extending into 1937, when all the emphasis was on defending what had been achieved both by way of wages and negotiating procedures. A second expansionist phase began in 1937 and lasted until it was overtaken by the beginnings of wartime conditions in 1939.

The two short periods favourable for improvements in pay and

conditions were, predictably, propitious for recruitment and membership increased during them. Even so, it remained fairly stable for most of the interwar years, which suggests that members appreciated the Association's strategies of containment through a difficult time. It was helped by a relatively low cost of living; the wage negotiations of 1919 were successfully concluded when inflation was high and their beneficiaries were well paid, relative to the average worker, throughout the succeeding depression. Realising this, and responding to economic problems that were both national and industry-specific, the railway managements embarked on cutting railway workers' pay.

Because the cuts threatened all railway workers, the three railway unions combined to oppose and minimise them, and to negotiate them away as soon as possible. Their alliance was also useful when managements introduced a new 'boss-friendly' negotiating machinery; the unions opposed it as long as possible and then worked hard to modify its procedures, making them more neutral.

The alliance was sustained through the hard times when all railway workers shared the same problems, but began to break up when real improvements in workers' pay and conditions once more looked possible. The different occupational groups had different demands and concepts of improved conditions; sectional interests became predominant and, as the second World War approached, the alliance's significance declined.

The chapter's detailed account is chronological and starts with the initial negotiations which secured the Association's recognition. The subsequent phases of negotiations are discussed in the context of the economic changes that conditioned them, leading to different emphases of interest from time to time. The two unions with which the Association allied were the NUR and ASLEF; unlike the Association they were recognised by the employers before the first World War and, by 1919, they

had some years' experience of conducting negotiations through a formal system that was the basis for the 'Machinery of Negotiation' set up under the Railway Act of 1921. The arrangements that were then established are set out in Appendix W and discussed in Chapter 1. The absence of formal arrangements for the Association before 1922, and the nature of those that applied thereafter, need to be borne in mind as the background to the continuous story that began in 1919.

Achieving Recognition: Wartime Experience and the Success  
of 1919

The the Association was not recognised by the railway companies before the first World War, so it was something of a breakthrough when W. Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, called the Association's General Secretary into consultation about railway affairs in 1914(1). This was tantamount to recognition, at least for wartime.

The government had taken control of the railways and appointed a committee of railway managers to administer them: the Railway Executive Committee (REC). The limits of such recognition as was represented by the meeting at the Board of Trade were revealed in 1915, when wartime inflation made wage increases necessary. Negotiated between the REC and the two unions ASLEF and the NUR, the increases were known as 'war bonus', implying that once peacetime conditions returned there would be a reconsideration. The Association was not invited to take part in the negotiations, (2) and rather blusteringly played down its exclusion in the pages of the *Railway Clerk*. The received wisdom at the time was that there should be periodic negotiations on the war bonus, so that it would to move in line with inflation. The establishment of regular

negotiations could serve as incentive to trade unions' recruitment; and the Association stood to lose out in this side effect and, at first, responded to the new situation by trying to play down the implications of its exclusion. But its bluster soon slackened with the realisation that the increase in trade union membership was general. (3) The war bonus negotiations were a watershed; wage negotiations formerly took place between a union or a deputation of employees and any one of the hundred or so separate railway companies; from now on they were all national. It was one more sign that the pre-war railway administration was doomed.

The Association's membership continued to rise sharply: 1913, 25,791; 1914, 29,394; 1915, 42,654; 1916, 49,036; 1917, 58,661; 1918, 71,441; (4). The Association estimated its constituency as 100,000 (5), which meant it had recruited nearly three-quarters of its possible members. It decided to press more strongly for recognition. The REC was approached and the Association soon found out the new sticking-point. The railway managers were prepared to negotiate with it for ordinary clerks, but not for the supervisors who administered them, that is, station-masters and the more senior clerks. (6) The REC had an ostensibly strong case, because the principle of common representation for supervisors and those they supervised had never been conceded. It was thought unlikely that the Association would organise enough support to overturn the strongly entrenched objections to it.

Common representation that includes supervisory or managerial grades with other workers continues to be problematic and it is remarkable that the Association pressed so strongly for it in 1918 and 1919. There are two particular disposing factors. Most station-masters - the largest proportion of the supervisory group - were in charge of stations some miles apart from each other and it is difficult to see how they could set up an organisation of their own; any manifestations of inclinations to

organise on their part made them susceptible to recruitment by 'company unions'. So there was more to the Association's solicitation of their support than the simple imperative of increasing membership; and a drive to recruit inspectors was a linked initiative, as inspectors travelled from station to station and could maintain contact between the station-masters and the Association. (7) Both groups had always been accepted as members, but when it became clear that the Association's right to negotiate for them would turn on the extent of their membership, there was a special drive to recruit them, with reduced subscriptions for inspectors. The Association's second reason for promoting common representation was the one used in public discussion. As is explained later in this chapter, the Association's bid for recognition became the subject of a Cabinet Conference early in 1919, and its position was presented thus, by G. J. Wardle, the Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, and until very recently the Association's representative in the House of Commons:

"As he had been a railway clerk for eighteen years he might be presumed to know something of railway organisation. He could not understand how the Government were to avoid granting recognition to the clerks. He himself, when 17½ years of age, had a clerk under him, and when his own chief was away he dealt with all correspondence. There were thousands of offices on the railways where the staff was quite small, and where, in the absence of the station-master, the chief clerk acted for him. To cut out the supervisory staff from the union by some arbitrary line would be quite impracticable.

The Association, by forming sections, had themselves recognised that there were differences between the several grades, and in that way had gone some distance to meet the objections of the railway companies. It was impossible to have a surgical operation and cut out the station-masters of the union or to give them truncated rights within the union. He thought detailed arrangements could be made within the union, and by it, which would fairly meet the apprehension of the Railway Executive. The National Union of Railwaymen were willing to part with the station-masters enrolled by them to the railway clerks". (8)

The Association had a basis for making a play to represent supervisory grades in its existing recruitment of station-masters, and

realised that the more station-masters it could recruit the stronger the case would be. Expecting a lively dispute, the Association decided to reorganise its station-master membership as well as setting out to increase it. A station-masters' conference was held at Birmingham on the week-end 20 and 21 July 1918 (9). Its purpose was to give an opportunity for station-masters from all parts of the country to meet each other and for the details of the separate organisation to be worked out.

The railway companies did not supinely allow the Association to recruit station-masters unhindered. They set up 'junior officer leagues', but these appear to have been still-born. (10) A more effective threat was the increased activity of the North East Station Masters Association (NESMA) (11). The NESMA was a curious society, not simply a 'company' union, although their company approved of it and audited its coal accounts. There was a custom in parts of the North-East of England for station-masters to act as coal retailers in the vicinity of their stations (12), and NESMA was to some extent a retailers' federation. As such, its members' interests were not aligned to trade union members' customary concerns, and on some points might be antithetical to them. There is no direct evidence that their increased activity was generally promoted by the railway companies, but there are indications in that direction and the Association's Executive and senior officers certainly thought it was. (13) The railway companies were more likely to approve of a body such as NESMA, over which they had an element of control through their power to facilitate the retail business, than of a completely independent body such as the Association. There is evidence that the managements of some companies did indeed encourage NESMA. (14) As a federation of coal retailers it would have been severely disadvantaged had it taken on the full function of a trade union, organizing the



services that trade union members would expect.

This then was the atmosphere in which the Association operated at the end of 1918. The War was over, so the Government would want to reorganise railway workers' pay and conditions before it handed the railways back to a post-war railway administration. The Government, even after the first post-war general election in December 1918, was virtually the wartime coalition, but the House of Commons upon which it depended was relatively right-wing. Collectivist experiments were over, and the country was to be returned to a peace-time status that was as close as possible to that of 1913.

The Association, meanwhile, pressed the REC to allow it to negotiate for the bulk of the clerical and administrative staff of the railway companies. It was not thought that this objective could be achieved without a strike so mass meetings were organised(15) and a special delegate conference to approve a strike was fixed for 2 February 1919. When a further letter from the REC was received in late January, reinforcing arguments made in earlier correspondence, the Association's Executive sent a deputation to the Board of Trade to explain what they intended to do. (16) The Cabinet discussed all this on 31 January. (17) It was decided that the subject needed wider discussion so a Cabinet conference was convened at which ministers, junior ministers and railway managers could discuss the problem.

Its first meeting was on 2 February. (18) The Association held a conference on the same day, to consider calling its members out on strike at 6 p.m. on 3 February (19). (The significance of the time was that most clerks would have just stopped work, so the effective start of the strike would be the 4 February. The eight-hour day for railway workers had been implemented on 1 February(20).

Most of the members of the Cabinet Committee thought that the

Association's case should be conceded when they learned that, of the 8,800 station-masters, 60 per cent were Association members and over 5,000 of them had made declarations that they wanted to be represented by the Association. The railway managers were still not convinced, so the meeting decided that the REC should meet the following morning (3 February) and their representatives should meet the rest of the Cabinet Committee in the afternoon(21). The Association's conference decided to approve the proposal for a strike, but to defer its start for a day, with negotiations to continue in the meantime(22).

When the Cabinet Committee met again, the railway managers found themselves in a minority. Only their Minister - Albert Stanley, then President of the Board of Trade and himself a former railway manager - supported their argument that the special and supposedly necessary railway discipline would be lost if the Association's case were conceded. So it was decided to refer the matter back to the Cabinet to pronounce on the principle of common representation for supervisors and subordinates by the same trade union. It was also pointed out that the Association were due to strike at 6 p.m. on the 4th February, so discussion could not go on too long(23).

The Cabinet met again at 11.30 a.m. the following day. Although reluctant to concede the principle because of its effects in other industries, and also reluctant to override the railway managers' arguments, they accepted that the Association's proposals were moderate(24) and that the wider industrial climate was uncertain. They were worried that if the Association struck the whole railway workforce might join them, a possibility made more likely because a limited London tube drivers' strike had just started(25). A general railway strike was something to be resisted at this juncture. In Glasgow, the industrial situation could not have been much worse. All the principal factories

were on strike, and a red flag ~~briefly flew~~ on the municipal flagpole. The Riot Act was read on 31 January, the local troops were confined to Maryhill barracks and troops from outside - presumably transported by train - were used to overawe the populace and restore the status quo(26).

The Cabinet decided that in the Association's case the principle should be conceded and that Stanley should meet representatives of the Association to negotiate the details of recognition(27).

The meeting took place later that day(28), making an agreement broadly in line with the Association's submission to the Cabinet(29). Here is a summary:

The Association was to provide autonomy within its structure for senior clerks and station masters, but they still would have access to Association officials.

Membership of the Association should not be made compulsory.

Certain staff who dealt with confidential matters or who worked closely with chief officers were to be excluded from membership.

Questions of discipline and management were not to come under the terms of recognition, but in this case paragraph 72 of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Railway Conciliation Scheme of 1907 which provides for an appeal before a final decision is made in cases of misconduct, neglect of duty, and other breaches of discipline.

The Association would not deny the right of other associations to represent the men, if they could make a good case for the right, on the other hand no preferential treatment would be offered to any association.

On the 4 February, the Association sent telegrams to all branches: "Full recognition conceded. Do not strike"(30). The news did not reach some members early enough to prevent their acting on the strike decision and they lost pay for the time they took off work, but they kept their jobs(31).

## The Initial Pay Settlement: 1919-20

The Association's Executive's original approach to the REC had been in terms of the Association's current 'programme' for pay and conditions; negotiations had been held up because station-masters were included but, with the newly agreed terms of recognition, they could now proceed. The programme had been in preparation for many years, having achieved its final form at a special delegate conference held at Liverpool on 16 and 17 November 1918 (32). One of the functions of the conference was to stiffen the spirit of the membership, because it was expected that neither recognition nor the employers' acceptance of the programme would come without a fight.

However, the formal object of the conference was to get endorsement for the programme to be presented to the REC. A general programme had already been worked out, in expectation of recognition, but the union's Executive Committee needed to be sure that whatever might be put forward as a basis for negotiation would be up-to-date and consistent with current opinion in the membership.

The outcome was not a simple authentication of the Executive Committee's plan. Amendments were proposed to various effect: the events surrounding the passage and aftermath of a particularly contentious one are here described in detail, illustrating something of the mood and aspirations of the membership at the time. The Executive Committee's response demonstrates their skill, and that of the General Secretary, A. G. Walkden, in managing union affairs.

The story involves three proposed salary scales for general clerks - the one incorporated in the Executive Committee's proposals, another that was the subject of the amendment which was proposed by the Wolverhampton Branch and the one which was finally included in the programme. (33)

All the scales started with £70 for 16 year olds. The Executive Committee's scale went up to £230 at the age of 33 and included an increment of £50 for 18 year olds. The second scale had a smoother progression and so was relatively unfavourable to clerks under 24, but extended to a maximum of £350 at the age of 42. Although the amendment was passed, the final scale retained the original maximum of £230 but was compressed, ending at the age of 28. The compression meant that, for the age-range it covered, the final scale was more favourable than both of the others as far as it went, but did not reflect the most radical feature of the Wolverhampton amendment: its long range.

The argument for the long scale was that only one in three hundred clerks could expect promotion, so most of them would be on the same salary scale for all their working lives. The scale was much less generous to younger clerks than the Executive Committee's because its proposers did not think eighteen year olds needed as much as the £130 in the scale as first drafted. They placed the biggest increase at the age of 25, when a clerk would be likely to be marrying and starting a family. The Executive Committee's proposed increments of £5 per annum between the ages of 19 and 29 were, they said, an insult.

The Executive Committee could only counter these arguments by saying that their scale reflected the railway companies' opinion that an 18 year old was worth appreciably more than a 17 year old. This did not satisfy the conference and the Wolverhampton amendment was passed by a large majority on the evening of Saturday, 16 November. The following morning the Executive Committee came back to the conference and Walkden said that they could not accept the amendment, contending 'at considerable length' (to quote the minutes) that it was doubtful whether it could be supported by the rank and file and whether the public or the Labour Party would agree to such a demand. He

suggested that the Wolverhampton point of view could be accommodated by the shorter salary scale with its increments of £10 per annum for clerks in their twenties. Additionally, a new clause was now suggested to deal with 'stagnation', by which was meant three years without promotion for a clerk who had completed the scale. If no promotion were available, a special salary increase would be awarded.

Walkden's oratory was persuasive enough for the proposed compromise to be accepted by a large majority. The Executive Committee now had support for a programme near enough to their first draft to be, as they saw it, a reasonable basis for negotiation. The General Secretary's skill had avoided the inclusion of hostages to fortune exemplified by the Wolverhampton amendment.

Once the Association was in a position to negotiate for clerks and their supervisors with the REC, the NUR was prompted to intervene. Having recruited some clerks and a larger number of supervisors, they wanted to join in the negotiations. A joint meeting of the NUR and the Association was held at Unity House on 3 July 1919 to organise a joint approach(34). The meeting accepted most of the programme for clerks' and station-masters' grades, as submitted to the REC on 10 January. The main alterations were that supervisors dealing with traffic staff should work a 48-hour week; and that the proposals for a 34 hour week for night workers and for ending 'split turns' should not be pressed. (Split turns are still being worked in 1992).

At the Executive Committee on 21 July, (35), the REC's proposed programme was considered. So far, it was only for clerks and compared unfavourably with the Association's. The REC's salary scale was based on pre-war rates plus a percentage to allow for the rise in the cost of living. Some idea of pre-war rates of pay can be obtained from a White Paper published in 1915(36). Its figures are derived from salaries paid

to railway workers in 1913, and, because of deficiencies in the base data, the mean average total pay of station-masters and station clerks is the only figure which can be quoted with some degree of reliability (37): £1.14.0 per week, or £88.16.0 per annum. During the war, it would have been increased by the addition of £1.13.0 war bonus, lifting it to £3.7.0 per week or £174.4.0 per annum. The new rates proposed by the REC were calculated at 92 per cent higher than pre-war rates (38), giving an average wage of £3.5.4. per week or £169.14.7 per annum. This would mean that many clerks would have a wage cut, albeit a small one.

The Executive Committee rejected the REC's proposals, but they were to be made the basis of the final settlement (39). Because it had taken so long to extract this mediocre programme from the REC, and because they foresaw a need for lengthy negotiations before it would be in a state acceptable to a majority of the membership, the Executive Committee asked the NUR for advice on how to speed up negotiations (40). The NUR said the Committee should write and ask if the station-masters' programme was ready, and also if the clerks' programme could be improved. If nothing was heard by 6 August, they should write again; if nothing was heard in the following week, they should protest to the Board of Trade (41). The Executive Committee followed this advice; they also prepared to hold a special conference on 17 August at Birmingham, which would be asked to authorise the Executive Committee to take industrial action (42).

An improved offer for clerks was received on 16 August, on the eve of the conference (43). There were improvements only for more senior clerks on the general (fifth grade) scale and for the higher grade clerks. The new offer addressed the problem of war bonus; for example, the pay increases proposed for higher grade clerks would involve a reduction in their bonus. At this stage, an adult's war bonus was worth £1.13.0 a week or £85.16.0 per annum; the REC proposed a new war bonus

scale geared to the proposed increases in salary. If someone's salary was increased by £90, then he would lose all his War Bonus - in effect his salary increase would be £4.4.0 per annum. At the bottom of the scale, if someone's salary was increased by only £5.0.0. per annum he would receive £85 in bonus - he would have a real increase of £5.0.0. per annum. Although the Executive were not yet happy with the REC's proposals, they at least provided that everyone would obtain an effective increase on his current salary, even though it might be very small.

Further action taken by the REC was also considered at this August conference. It had been announced that two quarterly bonuses were to be paid to station-masters' grades for the three-monthly periods ending 30 April and 31 July 1919. This was to compensate for the erosion in differentials they had experienced due to the 'conciliation grades' settlements ('conciliation grades' are railway manual workers; the term derived from the 'conciliation scheme' negotiated for them in 1907). Clerks earning over £300 per annum were to have similar bonuses. Walkden pointed out that they were the only improvements in these grades' pay, so far. Any permanent improvements for them would depend upon the outcome of the Association's negotiations in the forthcoming weeks. He also pointed out that the bonus payments would not be used when calculating pensions(44).

The conference duly approved the Executive Committee's efforts and authorised it to take any action - even calling on members to strike to ensure a reasonable settlement as soon as possible. This resolution was telegraphed to the REC.

The REC informed the Executive Committee the following day that the station-masters' programme would be ready that afternoon, but they still could not say when the supervisors' programme would be ready. The Executive Committee decided that if the station-masters' programme was



not forthcoming they would complain to the Board of Trade: if there was no satisfactory response by 22 August, the members would be called out on strike on 24 or 25 August (45). The NUR were told what was proposed. The station-masters' programme was received that afternoon and passed to the station-masters' negotiating committee (46). On the 19 August the REC slightly improved their programme for clerks (47).

The supervisors' programme was expected the following week. Settlement for the clerks was reached on 22 August (48). The improvements again seem small. The main concession appears to have been that the Association was to be allowed to negotiate for clerks receiving £300 per annum and upwards but not for those in the 'Special' Class (i.e. supervising clerks in the top grade). On salaries over £150 per annum the Civil Service scale of war bonus was to apply. All stations were to be reclassified; this meant that, in theory, all members' jobs were thrown into the melting-pot so that they could not be sure what their future salaries would be. It was said that classification would take at least two months but, in the event, it took much longer; reports of appeals against reclassification decisions were still being made in July 1921 (49). The supervisors' agreement was promised for 28 August, but the NUR said they would only deal with the supervisors in relation to the grades they supervised. They were eventually to obtain the same terms as the station-masters (50).

The negotiations for the station-masters' settlement were interrupted by the 1919 railway strike organised by the NUR and which lasted from 26 September to 5 October. They started again on 7 October, and on 8 November a settlement was finally reached. The negotiators had made marginal improvements on the original REC proposals. Another grade had been inserted, splitting up the lowest grade of station-master (51).

Once again, what was eventually settled was nearer to the REC programme than the Association's. Its Executive Committee may be open to criticism for raising members' expectations too high, but it must be remembered in their defence that the Association had never been recognised for salary-negotiating purposes before 1919 (52). Without experience, it was difficult for the RCA to judge what was realistic, and a passage in an interim report on the negotiations indicates its uncertainty. Walkden, as negotiator, reported to the Executive Committee that if the REC published its programme it was unlikely that the membership could be persuaded to take industrial action to improve the final settlement (53).

The negotiators could also have argued that the programme which was first presented to the REC was agreed by delegate conferences of the membership, so that it was the membership at large, or at least the delegates to the conferences, who were unrealistic (54). In the event, the membership accepted the settlement with very little show of disappointment. The only note of rebellion mentioned in the Executive Committee minutes was that some staff at Manchester (London Road) had circulated a printed handbill regretting the settlement (55).

These negotiations had not finally determined the arrangements of the male clerical staff's pay and conditions for the post-war period. They did not allow for two considerations: the REC's perception of war bonus as a wartime income supplement which would cease to be paid as early as conditions would allow, and their associated belief that there should be an element in the salary agreement to cope with changes in the cost of living, still rising but considered likely to fall in due course. In January 1920 the REC devised a scheme which would, to a certain extent, deal with both. The idea was to designate part of the war bonus as 'floating bonus' and to set up a sliding scale which would adjust it

so that, when true peace-time conditions returned and the cost of living stabilised, 'floating bonus' would be eliminated with any residue being absorbed into a clerk's normal salary. The sliding scale reduced or increased 'floating bonus' by £5 for every variation of the cost of living by five full points. Adjustments were to take place quarterly at the end of March, June, September and December. It appears that the only direction of 'floating bonus' actually envisaged by the REC was downwards; their letter about implementing their new scheme referred to no 'reductions' taking place before 30 September 1920(56), a date which represents something of a concession. In fact, unforeseen movements in the cost of living index and the practicalities of responding to them created problems which are fully discussed later in this chapter.

The Executive accepted the bulk of the REC's proposals and, by 2 February, a draft agreement had been approved (57). The formal Memorandum of Agreement, which was to be the basis of the railway male clerks' salary and conditions of employment for the whole of the interwar period, was signed on 1 March 1920(58).

Settlements for other (smaller) groups were made on following dates in the year(59):

Table 2

Relief Clerks	20 April
Railway Supervisory Staff	20 April
Traffic Control Staff	25 May
Women Clerks	26 August
Supervisory Dock Staff	11 November

The Settlement of 1920: Evaluation and the Further Context

In national terms the postwar settlements were relatively good. Average wages for male workers in 1919 were about £3.0.0. per week or

£170 per annum (60). Without taking into account war bonus, a fifth-grade clerk on the new scale would reach this average wage at the age of 27; from then on his earnings would exceed it. Most clerks - the only exclusions were new entrants appointed after 1 October 1920 - would have the advantage of war bonus which, although of most benefit to younger and worse-paid clerks, added considerably to all salaries, meaning that average wages were achieved before the age of 27. After 1919, the average wage rate index (base 1956 = 100) dropped sharply. In 1921, it was 53, in 1922 it was 38.8 and it reached its lowest point in 1933 at 34.4 (61). This meant that most adult railway clerks would have above-average salaries throughout the inter-war period.

Two factors modified this pattern: the sliding scale which adjusted salaries in line with the cost of living, and salary reductions made in July 1928 and March 1931. The working of the sliding scale and the wage-cuts are discussed at some length later in this chapter, but a brief summary of their effects follows. The cost of living dropped throughout the 1920s and 1930s but, as the sliding scale acted only on the 'floating bonus', the major part of members' pay was not eroded. Wages were cut in 1928 and 1931, each time by 2½ per cent but with the extra provision in 1931 of a further cut on salaries exceeding £100 per annum, being another 2½ per cent of the excess.

It is difficult to evaluate these two factors' full effect on salaries. The cost of living element operated only on part of a clerk's or station-master's war bonus. The REC probably considered that this would be sufficient to keep salaries in line with the expected fall in the Retail Price Index (RPI). In the event, the RPI fell more precipitately than could possibly have been expected. In 1920, when the salary agreement was formally dated, the RPI stood at 125, falling to 92 in 1922. It fell to 78 in 1923, thereafter fluctuating less wildly (62).

The cost of living adjustment was not designed to cope with such a fall and must have had little effect on salaries after 1923, although a rise in the RPI in the Autumn of 1923 meant that there was some. The Association's Executive applied for residual bonus to be increased, and the suspicion that the railway managers intended to use the sliding scale to deplete but not to increase salaries was partly confirmed. The railway managers contested the Executive's application which was referred to the Chairman of the National Wages Board, who decided in the Association's favour.

The salary cuts of 1928 and 1931 were not provoked by falls in the RPI but by large drops in railway receipts. These derived from the severe trade depression and competition from other forms of transport. The cuts in salary were unwelcome, but their effects on railway employees were mitigated by the concurrent fall in the RPI. It fell by three points between 1929 and 1930; between 1930 and 1931 it fell by another two; and by over two more between 1932 and 1933. Railway clerks, in fact all railway workers except workers on marginal, minor railways, had another advantage compared to other groups of workers at a time of recession: the security peculiar to railway work. It is not as easy to close down a portion of a railway as it is to close down part of a factory complex. Most of the 1920s and 1930s were characterized by more or less severe economic depression, with widespread unemployment. At such times, anyone in reasonably secure employment is in a relatively strong economic position. This is not to say that railway clerks were amongst the most comfortably-placed workers in the country, but their position was enviable by comparison to workers in general.

But the RCA's Executive Committee were not complacent about their members' good pay and superior working conditions. They did not compare their members' lot with workers in general, but with that of other

clerks: bank clerks, insurance clerks, or civil servants. Nevertheless, even with reference to these 'higher class' clerical occupations the E. C. could justifiably argue <sup>that</sup> its industrial strategy had brought significant improvements since the pre-war period. In 1911-1913, the average railway clerk's pay was only 65.5 per cent of the average Civil Service clerical officer's; in 1924 it was 78 per cent. The narrowing of the differential with bank clerks' pay was even greater (63).

Comparisons with elite clerical workers may have conditioned the Association's application for a 25 per cent salary increase in 1920, although the jump in inflation due to the short-lived post-war boom was its main justification. Before the application could be pressed to a conclusion the sudden drop in inflation in 1921, and the reduction in railway receipts due to the start of the inter-war depression, must have made it appear ridiculous. This chapter has already indicated that the pay settlement of 1919 was the basis for the Association's members' salaries throughout the inter-war period; this was a consequence of prevailing economic conditions. They included the low cost of living compared with the height it had reached just after the war when the salary settlement was concluded, the drop in railway receipts due to the widespread economic depression and the unexpected competition from other methods of transport. There was little justification for the Association to argue for salary increases; in fact, most of its negotiating skill over this period was addressed to countering the railway companies' efforts to cut salaries.

The pattern of salary arrangements and settlements between 1919 and 1939 suggests that railway clerks enjoyed a period of relatively moderate affluence. This has a bearing on the Association's behaviour between the wars: despite its being the only white-collar union to come out on official strike in May 1926, and other evidence of a higher level of

union activity than might be expected from clerical workers, it might also be argued to have been conservative in its general attitude.

Although the settlement of 1920 set the basic wage pattern for the next two decades, it was followed by another claim, prompted by the alarmingly intensive, but short-lived phase of inflation the same year. The settlement had not established a formal negotiating system, and the further working without one was instructive.

Negotiating without a Formal Structure: the 25 per cent

Pay Claim, 1920-21

Wartime inflation did not end in 1918; it continued to rise during the short-lived boom of 1919-1920. This post-war inflation did not last long. It was decreasing in early 1921 and - reflecting the level of economic activity - soon reached the low level of the inter-war years.

In early 1920, it was not realised how short-lived this intense period of high inflation was to be. In April 1920 the West Midlands Divisional Council told the Executive that the recently negotiated pay scales were too low. The Executive agreed with them and lodged a claim for a 25 per cent flat-rate increase on all salary scales(64). This may seem excessive, but inflation had been increasing rapidly and had been doing so for some time.

The other railway unions (NUR and ASLEF) also applied for a wage increase to cope with the increase in the cost of living. Unlike the Association they had an agreed machinery of negotiation, and two months later a 10 per cent increase was conceded(65). This success by conciliation staffs suggested that some part of the Association's claim would be met. However, although it had recently obtained recognition and had negotiated a pay settlement, it had to wait for the Railway Act

for a formal negotiating machinery. Without it, the Association did not get a hearing until August 1922. By then, the cost of living was back to double figures (in November 1920 it stood at 176(66)), so the Association's representatives had no hope of getting their full claim, but their members had lived through a period of high inflation with inadequate pay and had lost the differentials not long since established between their pay and that of conciliation staff.

The claim was processed in a haphazard and tardy fashion. As the railways were still subject to Government control, there were two interest groups on the managements' side: the Government and the hundred or so railway companies, and this was the last chance for some of their board members to make a decision with national implications. The other two railway unions also had an interest in the percentage increases at issue. The Association had to fight for a reasonable examination of its claim; the 1921 Railway Act would soon provide a machinery, but this particular claim was being processed whilst all the interested parties were also involved in negotiations in connection with the Act - a Parliamentary Bill for most of this time. All this militated against the Association's claim being dealt with efficiently and speedily even had there been goodwill on all sides, but another reading is that the Ministry and the railway managers were exploiting the opportunities for delay hoping, like Mr Micawber, that something would turn up. And so it did: the cost of living began to drop.

The Cabinet had authorised the Minister of Transport, Sir Eric Geddes, to handle matters arising from the National Wages Board's conclusions, and subsequent arrangements remained under Ministerial surveillance during the post-war reconstruction. In May 1921 the railway companies' reply to the unions' claim was forwarded by the Ministry of Transport to the Association's Executive (67). It presented the



Association with the facts of life as the railway managers saw them. They listed the more recent wage settlements, saying that there was no mention of the claim for a 25 per cent increase when they were negotiated. The railway managers said that family budgets, which the Association had collected in support of their claim, were of no relevance when wage rates were fixed, and listed the improvements in conditions which had already been conceded, all involving demands on the railway companies' financial resources. They insisted that the sliding scale adjustments were all that was needed to cope with inflation, and took the view that the railway industry could afford no more improvements in railway workers' pay and conditions in the foreseeable future. (The financial difficulties had arisen because the railways were facing real competition for the first time). The railway companies' case was presented at greater length than it had earlier been put to Geddes, but he was a receptive audience, whereas the Association's Executive were not (68)

Geddes and the railway managers were extremely resistant both to the Association's claim and one that was concurrently being pursued by the NUR, for the increase that it had recently negotiated to be extended beyond conciliation grades to other grades it represented - that is, including some in the same grades as some of the Association's members. Geddes was hostile for the same reasons as the railway managers, but he also had a more personal interest. The railway managers maintained that the railways should firmly refuse any more pay increases; that the principle that an award affecting one section of the men should automatically be extended to other grades was pernicious and would ultimately spell ruin; and that the clerical and supervisory grades' sliding scale agreement was more generous than one that applied to conciliation staff, enough for them to need no pay increase to compensate

for the rise in living costs.

Geddes's more personal reason for opposing increases in railway workers' pay was partly a result of his friendship with Lord Ashfield, the title assumed by Albert Stanley on his ennoblement, who was Chairman and Managing Director of a large combine of intra-urban facilities in London (trams and buses as well as underground railways). At Geddes' instigation, Ashfield wrote to Geddes on 17 May, putting on record his contribution to a dinner-party conversation with Geddes a few days earlier. (69) Geddes quoted extensively from the letter in a memorandum he sent to the Cabinet on the 15th June, 1920; briefly, it detailed problems of managing militant staff. The Cabinet do not appear to have taken the letter as seriously as did Geddes, because there is no mention of it or its purport in the report of the Cabinet's conclusions (70).

The Executive were incensed when their claim was cursorily rejected, with the Association's having <sup>been</sup> given no chance to state the case or submit evidence. The case for a 25 per cent increase was supported by ASLEF, who wanted it for locomotive supervisors. The three trade unions had to wait until 27 January 1921 for a meeting with the Minister of Transport (71). The cost of living was still very high, but had begun to drop. The Minister said he would institute an inquiry into the claim, under which the evidence submitted by the companies and the unions would be examined and reported on by Sir William Marwood and Mr H. J. Wilson, senior officials at the Ministry (72).

The General Secretary wrote to the Minister of Transport in reply to the railway managers' contentions, but expected the resolution of the claim to wait for the conclusion of the Minister's inquiry (73). However, there was another factor the Association's Executive could not have known about: the railway managers were casting around for ways of reducing wage bills. They were complaining to the Ministry of Transport

that obligations accepted by the Government during the period of war-time control committed them to unreasonably high expenditure(74). Their case was investigated, but the only instances of commitments having been made against their advice was when an eight-hour day was granted in December 1918, and possibly when the maximum rate for engine drivers was increased by 1s 0d a day in August 1919.

A compensation payment of £10 million was made to the railway companies under the terms of the Railway Act of 1921, to compensate for 'the standardisation of pay, hours of duty or other conditions of service which were to be made under the terms of the Act' (75). This payment was presumably also intended to include compensation for improvements made in railway workers' pay and conditions during the Government's control of the railways; but their managements nevertheless seemed to think that the Government was leaving them to carry an unreasonable burden. They were also dissatisfied with the negotiating machinery which was to be implemented under the terms of the Railway Act. The initial absence of such machinery, and the Minister's sympathy with the railway managements, kept the pay claim 'on a back burner' whilst the case for it was at its strongest.

#### The First Assessment of the 'Sliding Scale': 1921-22

In 1921, 'residual bonus', the portion of pay governed by the 'sliding scale', became an item of dispute between the railway managers and the Association whilst the 25 per cent pay claim was still pending. It was a most complicated part of railway workers' pay, so much so that problems about it arose again in 1922. The National Wages Board that was required by the legislation of 1921 was not yet in full operation, but it had a Chairman-designate, Sir William Mackenzie, who was called in

to help settle the disputes about the sliding scale both in 1921 and 1922. The war bonus had been introduced to adapt wages to wartime conditions; it was retained when inflation persisted after the war but the railway companies expected that the need for it would disappear when peacetime conditions were reinstated. The pay settlements of 1919-1920 provided for it to be dissolved through the twin applications of the new pay scales and the sliding scale that was to be invoked as inflation declined(76).

In July 1921 the railway managers told the Association that as the cost of living had dropped below 125, their employees' residual bonus was to be cut accordingly (77). The Association considered that their members' pay should not be reduced whilst their pay claim remained outstanding - the Ministry of Transport was still delaying a definitive reply on it. (78).

The Association asked the railway managers to refer the issue to Sir William Mackenzie. The managers were reluctant because they were accustomed to making such decisions(79). Eventually, they decided to refer the question as a special case; by now it was May 1922. In August, Sir William said that the companies had acted quite properly in reducing their employees' pay in line with the cost of living (80).

He would have known of the NUR's claim that the conciliation staff's award should be extended to other railway workers and that the Association's outstanding claim was now before the newly instituted Central Wages Board, which would presumably take account of any evidence that might be produced by Marwood and Wilson of the Ministry. He would also be aware that the cost of living had declined from its high point of 176 in November 1920, when these claims originated, to 81 in August 1922.

The 25 per cent Pay Claim, the End of the Story: 1922

The new machinery of negotiation provided for a Central Wages Board, with equal representation for railway managements and trade unions. If they could not agree on an issue, it was passed on to the National Wages Board, which had an independent chairman, appointed by the Minister of Labour, and representatives of railway 'users' as well as of the railway industry. Its decisions had to be delivered within 28 days and were normally accepted by both parties(81).

In July 1922 the Central Wages Board rejected the Association's claim but sent the NUR's to the National Wages Board. The Association's representatives objected, saying that they would try to persuade the National Wages Board to consider their claim anyway. The Central Wages Board evidently saw the two claims as alternatives, preferring the NUR's claim because it derived from an award already made: both claims were for the same grades of workers.

Much had happened since the claims had originally been made: the inflationary pressures which had led to them had disappeared and the finances of the railway industry were being eroded by increasing competition. There was also another pressure on the railway companies. The previous November (1921), the Federation of British Industries (FBI) and other bodies of employers had sent deputations to the railway managers saying that they wanted lower pay for railway workers so that the railway rates could be reduced (82). Soon after, but not apparently as a result of this pressure, the increases in pay obtained by conciliation staff in June 1920 began to disappear. Railway operation in more marginal areas of Great Britain, such as Wales, Cornwall or Scotland, has always been financially less profitable, so it is not surprising that, in January 1922, it was Scottish railway companies -

amalgamations under the 1921 Railway Act had not yet been completed - which asked the National Wages Board to withdraw these pay increases for them. The request was granted and the pay increases were eroded gradually, by doubling the amount of the decreases under the sliding scale agreement. A little later, the pay increases of English railwaymen were diminished in the same way, so that the greater part had been withdrawn by July 1922. The NUR accepted the erosion, but were able to stave off any further attacks on conciliation staff's wages. Their efforts were made easier because unemployment, which had reached a high level in 1921, dropped back in 1922 (83).

This, then, was the background to the National Wages Board's consideration of the NUR's claim for a 10 per cent increase in clerical and supervisory workers' pay in October 1922. The Board met on October 11th; the Association, supported by ASLEF, urged their claim for 25 per cent, but the Board decided to consider only the NUR's claim. Their first decision was that they needed more information, so they asked the Ministry of Transport for the report commissioned from Marwood and Wilson in 1921 (84). Five days later the Board rejected the NUR's claim by a majority vote; and there is some justification for the minority's opinion that the claim had been prejudiced by the delay to which it was subjected. (85) The NUR had obtained the pay increase for 'conciliation' workers when the cost of living was increasing and no-one knew when it would stop or where it would level out. No doubt the Association would have got something had they been able to force the issue at the same time as the NUR was able to put the 'conciliation' workers claim through the formal machinery.

## The Second Assessment of the 'Sliding Scale'

By May, 1922, the economic conditions both of the country and the railway industry were all too apparent. One of the few favourable factors was the low cost of living. It had continued falling from November 1920 to July 1923, when it reached 69. During this period, the sliding scale had eroded the Association's members' pay as the cost of living went down (86). In the Autumn of 1923, the cost of living began to rise once more and the Association applied for pay to be increased. The railway managers responded that they wanted an end to clerical workers' war bonus, and uniform salary scales. They said the governing point on the cost of living index was 125, and that increases could not be made until this point was again reached. However, the railway companies had increased conciliation staff's pay in line with rises in the cost of living; another reference to Sir William Mackenzie produced an opinion in the association's favour: if residual bonus could be eroded when the cost of living fell, then it should increase when the cost of living rose (87).

## The Inter-war Period: Its True Face

The economic mood of the interwar period for the railway industry was, by now, firmly established. There was to be little realistic negotiation for improvements in wages or conditions until the few years immediately before the second World War. The emphasis was to be on resisting wage cuts.

The Executive did not have to wait long for the next call from the railway companies for wage economies. It came in July 1923, when they

said they wanted to reduce wages, so as to reduce freight charges. This episode ended with the ASLEF strike of 1924(88). The next approach from the railway companies was in June 1925. This was soon after the return to the Gold Standard at the pre-war parity, one of the effects of which was to make the export of goods more difficult. Goods not exported require no transport to ports, so railway freight returns stood to be severely affected by this change in policy.

The proposals were that all wages, salaries and directors' fees should be reduced by 5 per cent, but that the sliding scale bonus would continue. This wage cut would initially last for one year; after that it would be terminable by either the trade unions or the railway companies giving three months notice(89). Months of negotiating ended on 16 November 1925, when the National Wages Board rejected the railway companies' proposals(90).

Between 1925 and June 1928, when the wage cuts were again proposed by the railway companies, the General Strike - discussed in Chapter 5 - marked a deep divide. Before it, the Association's Executive thought its membership could be mobilised against a wage cut, even to the extent of coming out on strike. After the actual experience of striking, and especially of the aftermath to it, the grounds for confidence in solidarity were weakened. It should also be noted, though, that as the experience of the strike receded, to be overtaken by that of working conditions which included wage cuts, militant attitudes re-emerged.

#### The Railway Industry's Economic Problems: 1928

Unlike the earlier proposals, those of 1928 resulted in an actual wage cut, not solely because the railway trade unions were in disarray after the General Strike of 1926, but also because the economic condition



of the railway industry had deteriorated enough for the railway companies to make a defensible case for economies. In 1921, part of their case against the claim for a 25 per cent pay increase was that competition from road transport was eating into their revenue. This competition was not great in 1921 (91), but it was much more damaging by 1928.

The change was not simply that the railway industry gradually lost the virtual monopoly of long-distance transport of passengers and goods, which it had enjoyed prior to the first World War, but that the business lost to road transport tended to include the more lucrative traffic. This meant that profits fell more quickly than the changes in transportation might suggest (92). And not all the loss of rail traffic was due to competition; the British economy was in decline. The older industries declined fairly rapidly and the newer ones did not grow fast enough to maintain a balance. There were some variations in this pattern over the period, with a decline in 1921, some recovery prior to 1928, a sharp drop between 1929 and 1932, and finally a slow recovery up to the outbreak of the War. The decline in economic activity meant a corresponding decline in inland traffic, and it is difficult to distinguish the effects on the two factors which reduced the railways' profitability (93).

One of the reasons advanced by some commentators as a factor in the railways' poor economic performance is that it was too tightly constrained by the 1921 Railway Act (94), which provided for a schedule of standard charges, drawn up by an independent tribunal, for carrying passengers and goods. The companies were allowed to charge 'exceptional' rates, but these had to be broken down into their separate components. This charging scheme was to take effect in 1928 and it was calculated that, if the railways were run 'economically', then the industry would earn a revenue called the 'Standard Revenue', which was based on what the

railway industry earned in 1913. The 1921 Act was drafted with no thought of the railways' possible loss of their virtual monopoly of inland long-distance carriage. The economic contraction was to have its main effect on the older staple industries which had developed alongside the railway industry and could not change their mode of transport as easily as the newer industries. Therefore, the old industries depended upon the railways, but the newer industries could use any transport which was available.

The railway companies' reaction to competition was to obtain legislative permission to invest in road transport companies themselves(95). This was only partly successful. Such benefits as the new investments brought were not evident by the summer of 1928 and it was all too clear that the 'Standard Revenue' would be nowhere near established. So the railway companies turned to their staff to help them to achieve at least some semblance of economic stability.

#### The First General Pay Cut: 1928

The foregoing has summarised the background to the negotiations which began on Tuesday 26th June, 1928, when the General Secretaries of the railway trade unions met the Railway Staffs Conference. William Clower, the Chairman, told the unions that cash receipts of the railway companies were over £4 million less than during the same period the previous year. The railway companies wanted to remedy this situation by reducing labour costs (96). The details of the proposed savings were not presented at this meeting, but another was called for July 18th, when the companies presented their plans.

Most of the Association's Executive attended, but the General Secretary and the President were at the International Transport Workers Conference at Stockholm, so the attenuated Executive agreed that no binding commitments would be made. The Association's Executive did not find this too difficult a task because they were not the only union with senior officials away at Stockholm - the NUR's Industrial General Secretary was presiding there(97).

The railway companies told the unions in some detail how their economic position had deteriorated (98), and detailed the wage cuts that they said would be needed. The proposals were that the remaining war bonus should be withdrawn; that all enhanced payments for night-duty, Sunday duty and overtime should be cancelled; that there would be a temporary suspension of the Guaranteed Week and Guaranteed Day for wages staff and, in their place, a guarantee that each worker would receive 'weekly earnings from all sources, including any Sunday duty and overtime, of not less than his standard week's wages' (99).

The negotiating machinery was not involved: a decision that stands to be questioned given the disadvantages of informal proceedings. It appears that each side had a dominant personality who preferred them on this occasion: Sir Felix Pole of the GWR and J.H. Thomas, the General Secretary of the NUR.

Sir Felix Pole (100) was the Chairman of the meeting held on 18 July, and announced that, "it was possible for Railway Companies and the Trade Unions to make a binding agreement, and the companies preferred not to go to the National Wages Board." (101) This attitude is understandable from an employer's representative but not from the General Secretary of the largest railway trade union. P. S. Bagwell has set out Thomas's position as follows:

"Since 1920 the invariable procedure had been to negotiate through

the Central and National Wages Boards; but he did not advise following this precedent since before these bodies they would have to convince the representatives of business and of the general public. The traders were all saying that the cause of the railways' difficulties was the 'high rate of railwaymen's wages'. His view, therefore, was that if they had to go through this machinery with the existing national agreements, 'nothing could save them ... '. By 60 votes to 14, congress endorsed the plan of the E.C. negotiating directly with the companies, provided that any sacrifices made should be spread over the whole staff and that any proposed agreement be submitted to an S.G.M. before ratification." (102).

There were two further considerations. The railway companies had never been satisfied with the negotiating machinery imposed on them by the 1921 Railway Act (and, in 1933, they persuaded the unions to accept a modified form of negotiating machinery); also, temporary wage cuts negotiated informally would be at least partly under the control of the trade unions. If wage cuts were imposed as a consequence of a judgement by the National Wages Board, then the unions - in theory - would not have the same control.

When J.H. Thomas asked how long the companies wanted the cuts to last, Sir Felix Pole replied that they did not want to put a time limit on them, but did not intend to re-introduce war bonus(103). The immediate and predictable reaction of the trade union representatives was hostile, but they asked for more details of the decreases in traffic and revenue, agreeing to meet the railway companies again on 24 July.

The President and General Secretary of the Association returned from Stockholm in time to attend a preliminary meeting with the other two unions on 23 July. They jointly decided that they could not accept the proposals. The Association's Executive were prepared to accept a two-and-a-half per cent cut in wages, on condition that all outstanding matters to do with the General Strike were cleared up. The NUR was prepared to make a contribution, provided that it was equitable and applied to everyone. ASLEF would not agree to any cuts; they wanted the

railway companies to present their proposals to the National Wages Board (104).

Next day the unions put their conclusions to the railway companies' representatives, who said that anything decided at the negotiations would be offered to ASLEF; ASLEF's decision meant that it had withdrawn from them. The companies offered revised proposals: a five per cent cut from the gross pay of all railway employees, but with no adult's pay reduced to less than £2 a week; war bonus to be withdrawn a year after the proposed cuts came into effect, when they would also be reviewed; the new arrangements to be terminable at the end of a year - subject to three months notice - by either party to the agreement. (105).

Nothing was decided. Negotiations were to be resumed the following afternoon; at a preliminary meeting in the morning J.H. Thomas said that the proposal on the war bonus should be rejected and that the unions should concede no more than a three-and-a-half per cent cut based on a graduated scale. Walkden, for the Association, agreed that the war bonus should not be jettisoned but suggested that the maximum cut should be two-and-a-half per cent ~~for all grades.~~ The NUR's Executive accepted the flat-rate method by a majority vote, and the meeting was then joined by ASLEF's Executive, in attendance at Thomas's invitation. After being brought up to date on events so far, they decided to continue to insist on formal negotiations(106).

The afternoon meeting turned out to be largely a dialogue between Thomas and the railway managers, for two reasons. The meeting was mostly about determining the size of the wage cut and, by now, Thomas had a reasonable appreciation of the two unions' thinking on this subject. The second reason was that also involved in these negotiations were the shopmen, whose jobs were most at risk and who were members of the NUR(107). A flat-rate wage cut was eventually agreed at 2½ per cent,

subject to ratification by all the railway companies.

The following morning, the Executives of the NUR and the Association met most of ASLEF's Executive. Walkden and Thomas explained what had been agreed, and asked them not to present a disunited front to the National Wages Board. They decided to attend the following morning's meeting with the railway companies' representatives(108), and the agreement on the cuts was signed on Friday, 27 July. Its terms were much like those attached to the railway companies' proposals for a five-per-cent cut in that it could be terminated after a year, subject to three months notice (109). It would take effect on 13 August 1928.

The agreement was ratified by a Special Delegate Conference of the Association on 12 August(110). In September a similar agreement was concluded with the Metropolitan Railway Company (111) and a sub-committee was set up to monitor the railway companies' finances and determine when the cut ought to be restored (112).

#### The Wage Cuts Temporarily Lifted: 1929-30

In April 1929 the sub-committee reported that the railway companies' traffic figures had improved, and the Association's Executive asked the other railway unions to combine with them to start the proceedings towards getting railway workers back on full pay. (113). The other unions were reluctant to move so soon(114), and it was August before the formal notice to end the wage cut was served. The railway companies asked for a meeting; (115) the NUR and the Association agreed to one on 24 September, (116) but ASLEF could go no further until after a meeting fixed for its Executive on 7 October(117). The railway companies agreed that goods and passenger traffic had increased, but said that receipts were still in decline. They supplied statistical evidence, asking the

unions to study it and to arrange another meeting at which ASLEF could be present (118).

On 11 October the three unions agreed that the railway companies had not made out a sufficient case for the cut to stand. The Association was under some pressure from its membership(119), its Annual Conference having voted in May that the cut should end in November(120). On hearing of the unions' decision, the railway companies replied that they had hoped the unions would have waited until all the 1929 figures were available, insisting that the cut was still needed and the lowest that could be managed. They claimed that they would be forced into asking the Wages Boards for larger cuts if the trade unions persisted with their pressure.

The trade unions were left to consider their position. Worried about the continuing threat to shopmen's employment, the NUR was prepared to accept the cut for a further six months from 13 November provided that the shopmen's full-time employment was guaranteed. Under pressure from its members but ill-placed to resist the railway companies without the support of the larger union, the Association proposed a formula for retaining the wage cut for another six months, to be followed by a twelve-month truce during which there would be no worsening of National Agreements. The Executives of the other two unions accepted the proposal, but the railway companies would agree only if the 'truce' period was halved. The timetable for the following year therefore became: 13 November 1929 to 13 May 1930, wages cut by two-and-a-half per cent; 13 May 1930 to 13 November 1930, wages restored. The companies made no further moves to reduce wages(121).

The Association's negotiators defended their stewardship to a Special Delegate Conference on 20 October 1929. The delegates were not too delighted by the prospect of another winter of reduced pay, but they

were pleased that normality was to follow. There appears to have been a general feeling that the negotiators could have done no better(122).

The Annual Conference of 1930 was at Llandudno, in May. The wage cut had ended a week earlier, but it appears to have made the membership restless about pay and conditions. The Association's policy on them was based on the 'Liverpool programme' which was devised in 1918, finalised at a conference in Liverpool, and used for the following year's salary negotiations. The Conference of 1930 decided that the Liverpool Programme should be superseded by one that took account of relevant decisions taken at subsequent Annual Conferences. The Executive was to present a draft to a special delegate conference to be held before 9 November, having first circulated a preliminary version to the branches(123).

The Executive did not want a special delegate conference until the 'truce' had ended(124). Some of them were M.Ps on the Government side, and likely to have been especially aware of the poor economic condition of both the country and their industry. J. H. Thomas was Lord Privy Seal, in the Cabinet and with a brief to reduce unemployment. Even had he not discussed the worsening conditions with Walkden, many of the Executive were likely to have reasons for being apprehensive about the railway companies' plans for the end of the 'truce' and so to have been disposed to hold back.

The Association's negotiating committee worked on the new programme for some months and the Executive made a few alterations to it in August after circulating it to the branches; the Special Delegate Conference was to be empowered to decide which items were to be submitted to the railway managements(125). During the summer of 1930, the NUR also devised a new programme to be considered by a special general meeting held in the autumn (126).



The Wage Cuts Restored, and Wider Issues: 1930-33

The Association's Special Conference was held over the weekend of the 8 and 9 November. At an Executive meeting held just beforehand, letters from both the British and Irish railway companies were read out. Both groups wanted to meet the trade unions to discuss wage economies within the next few days, as soon as the truce ended(127).

The Special Delegate Conference spent some of its time discussing the impending meeting with the railway companies; delegates had the benefit of much 'inspired propaganda' that had appeared in the press during the last few days. They decided that the Executive should present the new programme to the railway companies when and how they wanted. They also 'pledged [the conference's] support to the Executive Committee in resisting any encroachments on the standard rates of pay and conditions of employment of the Railway, Clerical, Administrative and Supervisory Employees' (128).

The following Thursday, the three unions' Executives met representatives from the railway companies, and heard proposals for wage cuts that were in some ways worse than those proposed in July 1928(129). One in particular would have affected a large part of the Association's membership most severely: to divide Class 5, the lowest grade of clerk, into two classes, 5 and 6. When the male clerical staff were classified in 1920, 57.2 per cent were in Class 5(130), so the bulk of railway clerks were likely to stay in it all their working lives. Its maximum salary was £200 per annum at the age of 31. The new proposal would effectively restrict many such clerks to a whole working life in class 6, with a maximum salary of £150(131).

The Association's Executive decided on 27 November to reject the railway companies' proposals and to ask them to put into effect five

items from the Association's new programme. These dealt with 'stagnation' (working in the same grade for a long period); classification; non-salaried, unappointed and temporary staff; higher class temporary duty; payment for Sunday duty(132).

The Executive and the representatives of the railway companies met on 10 December(133). The managers persuaded the Association not to put forward the item on classification to the Central Wages Board, but to discuss its implications separately with railway managers. There was no agreement on the other proposals, and they were referred to the Central Wages Board, which passed them to the National Wages Board(134). The National Wages Board began hearing evidence on 19 January 1931(135). The two-and-a-half per cent cut was reinstated, and supplemented: all earnings in excess of £100 per annum were to be subjected to a further cut of two-and-a-half per cent. Two of the Association's items were accepted: on temporary duty in a higher class and payment for Sundays(136).

The Trade Union and Co-operative Union members of the National Wages Board signed an 'Addendum' to its findings, to the effect that in their opinion only public ownership and control could solve the railways' problems(137). (This may have been intended to signal to the Minority Labour Government, then in office, what its transport policy should be). A Special Delegate Conference held in London on 15 March accepted the findings (138). It is difficult to see what else they could do, although it was an unpleasant judgement for them to endorse. From August 1928 until May 1930 the Association's members had endured a cut of two-and-a-half per cent in their earnings, and had warmly greeted their release from it. (139). Now, less than a year later, it was reintroduced and was practically doubled for many clerks. It would have been with some relief that the three railway trade unions shifted their attention to the

Addendum to the National Wages Board report. On 27 March a joint sub-committee drawn from the Executives of the three unions was established, to take all steps to ensure implementation of the principle of the Addendum. A long-standing Railway Nationalisation Society had previously been a minority enthusiasm, although Walkden was a prominent member, but it now it became a joint railway trade union effort (140).

Although the Metropolitan Railway and the London Traffic Combine (also known as T.O.T. - Trains, Omnibuses and Tubes) together managed most of London's underground railways, the Metropolitan Railway Company tended to follow the lead of the main-line railway companies in many ways - including industrial affairs - but the London Traffic Combine had its own style of management (141). The two companies' conduct of their affairs during the economic depression of the 1930's was characteristic: employees of the Metropolitan and the main-line railways all had the same pay cuts in March 1931 (142), whilst the London Traffic Combine made no cut but said they would negotiate one if necessary. The 1921 Railway Act did not cover their underground railways, so their managements were not bound by the National Wages Board's decisions.

The London transport system was not under the same economic pressure as the main-line railways. Its work was mostly passenger transport, which to a large extent meant moving people between homes in the suburbs and work in the City and West End. The inter-war period was notable for suburban developments farther and farther from the centre of London and, as car ownership was not yet widespread, London's intra-urban transport system was economically viable (143). Given its more favourable economic circumstances, it may appear strange that the Metropolitan Railway Company tended, so often, to conduct its affairs like the main-line companies, but for a critical stage of its development its Chairman, Sir Edward Watkin, was also Chairman of a main-line railway company in the

North Midlands, and he has been described as dominating another, in the South East. Years earlier, he had attempted to link North Eastern France to Northern England via a Channel Tunnel and had proposed a link-up of the three railway companies, which he virtually controlled; the South Eastern Railway, the Metropolitan Railway and the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway(144). His presence explains why the Metropolitan Railway was likely to consider itself a link in the chain of main-line railways rather than merely a commuter railway.

In December 1931 the London Traffic Combine gave notice that they now wanted a pay cut(145). The three railway unions saw no justification for it and told the company that if they combined with the unions to persuade the new Coalition Government to reintroduce the London Passenger Transport Bill, which had been part of its predecessors' programme, their problems would be overcome (146). The Combine did not agree that economies which might come by way of the Bill would be sufficient (147).

Nothing more was heard from the Combine for some time, but a pay cut went ahead for its Special Class clerks, (148) who were not represented by the Association as the Combine did not allow their recruitment(149). The Association consulted its London Traffic Combine members, who were prepared to leave the final negotiations to the Executive(150). The Combine's wage cuts were announced in July 1932, and were similar to those handed down by the National Wages Board, but with one modification: no adult employee's earnings would fall below £2.10s.0d in any one week (151).

The Association agreed to the cuts, ASLEF rejected them and the other unions that were affected had to consult their members. The Combine's bus workers rejected them on a ballot, but the Combine told the Transport and General Workers Union, that the cuts would operate from 23rd September 1932(152). Despite the opposition, there was little

evidence of disruption either to bus or train traffic. Many employers were resorting to wage cuts in the early 1930s and industrial action on the issue was unlikely to have commanded much support. Another consideration was that London's transport workers were likely to have been preoccupied with their prospects as employees in a nationalised industry. Contrary to expectations, the Coalition Government had not dropped the Labour Government's London Passenger Transport Bill, having pragmatically accepted the case for London's underground trains, buses and trams to be under unified administration. The Bill was enacted on 13 April 1933(153).

Whilst the Association's members who worked for the new London Passenger Transport Board were considering the implications of their new status, those who worked for the four main-line railway companies, were faced with the possibility of yet another wage cut. The railway companies were known to be casting round for economies. Since May 1932 (154), the railway trade unions had been negotiating with some of them on 'pooling' agreements. The essence of these was that companies would 'pool' competitive traffic and the receipts would also be 'pooled', by being divided on the basis of the actual traffic in 1928-30(155). The first of these agreements, between the London Midland and Scottish and the London and North Eastern companies, was proposed in May 1932; later that year the Great Western also became involved(156).

The railway unions were concerned that these arrangements would lead to staff dismissals(157), and the Association was particularly worried that the Minister of Transport had authorised them without providing safeguards for staff(158). The companies later gave a written undertaking that they would not dismiss anyone taken on before 1 July 1932, but they reserved the right to accelerate the age of retirement and to transfer people to worse-paid jobs(159).

The railway unions monitored pooling closely, but found few specific instances of detrimental effects. Examples in the first few months include the loss of an opportunity for promotion, when the vacancy created by the retirement of the Regional Passenger Manager at York was filled by the transfer of a manager from the Cheshire Lines Committee(160); another was that of a 59-year-old man who was sacked as a direct result of the pooling (161). But accurate monitoring was difficult because it entailed distinguishing the direct effects of pooling from normal staff movements. The difficulty was exacerbated by an actual increase in the total number of workers employed by the railway companies between 1933 and 1934(162). As far as total railway employment was concerned, 1933 was the worst year of the depression (163) and the increase, in part, represented the beginning of a recovery. (A Road Traffic Act in 1930 and a Road and Rail Traffic Act in 1933 helped the railways to compete on something like equal terms with road haulage).

The recovery could not have been foreseen on 30 September 1932, when railway companies' representatives met the three unions and asked for the largest wage cut so far: 10 per cent(164). The exact terms were that the current cuts imposed under clause 99 of Decision No. 119 of the National Wages Board(165) should be replaced by a deduction of 10 per cent from the earnings of all railway employees (including railway directors) subject to no person's weekly earnings falling below 38s per week (166). The unions rejected the proposal at a further meeting on 14 October(167), and it then began its trek to the National Wages Board, where it arrived on 29th November(168).

An interesting feature of this session of the Board, as far as the Association was concerned, was Walkden's criticism of the railway companies' investment policy; the companies had claimed that their main problem was that they had not enough surplus to pay shareholders an

adequate return on their capital(169). Walkden's point was that much of the railways' capital assets were unremunerative, dating back to the early years of railway development and should be written off. He said that they should be converted into a 'sinking fund', giving the example of the Glasgow Corporation which had cleared a debt of £2,359,000 by this means. He also cited the London and North Eastern Railway Company, which had converted some of its stock into a sinking fund debenture stock in 1930. In connection with the last example, there had been no difficulty in clearing the stock: the list was closed within an hour(170). This point is important, because the railway companies' representatives said that whilst the Government had the resources for this type of exercise, the companies had not(171). Their basic argument was that they needed to pay reasonable dividends on the capital they borrowed, otherwise investors would lose confidence in railway shares. The evidence of the LNER's sinking fund appears to be that railway shares were so highly regarded in the 1930's that there was much more scope for investment management than railway managers, generally, were prepared to contemplate.

Criticism of other aspects of railway management in similar terms to Walkden's tend to confirm that his strictures were just. This was written in 1974, with a hindsight that Walkden could not possess:

"One cannot, however, acquit the railways of responsibility for some part of their economic misfortunes in the inter-war years. For one thing, they probably interpreted their obligations more rigidly than the law demanded. ....The organizational problems arising from railways working on a large scale and the growth of a generation of railway men unaccustomed to a competitive environment may help to explain the deficiencies. The deficiencies, however, existed and contributed to the general economic adversity which the railways encountered in the 1920's and 1930's." (172).

The railway companies may not have had the same resources as the Government but they had its backing. The Road Traffic Act of 1930 and

the Road and Rail Traffic Act of 1933 were both partly designed to lessen the effect of competition from road transport. There appears to have been some appreciation of the 1921 Railway Act's inappropriateness to post-war conditions. It envisaged that the railways' near-monopoly would continue for the foreseeable future and this assumption included such provisions as the arrangements for fixing freight rates. As has been shown, it was unjustified.

The railway companies' other main argument was that their workers were overpaid, especially in real terms. They said that wages generally had risen by 68 per cent since 1914, but railway wages had risen by 114 per cent (173). As has been related, the railway companies thought that the wage structure they had inherited in 1920 was a bad bargain. The railway unions replied that pre-war rates of pay were 'disgracefully' low and nobody should dream of returning to them; (174) that rates of pay negotiated in 1919 and 1920 were meant to be permanent; and that they had then believed management to share this common understanding with them (175). Finally, they advanced a Keynesian-type argument; workers' wages were spent every week, circulating quickly: more of this type of expenditure was needed to move Britain out of recession. They quoted from an article in the *Railway Gazette*, "How can prosperity be expected to return if the means for the purchase of industrial produce is reduced." (176)

The proceedings of the National Wages Board lasted from 29 November to 20 December. Its six separately reported findings came out on 13 January 1933 and demonstrated disunity, political but unusual, as the Wages Boards normally managed to reach consensus. The representatives of the railway companies found for the ten per cent deduction; those of the Federation of British Industries (FBI) and the Chambers of Commerce also agreed on it; but insisted on a report of their own. The



representatives of the Co-operative Union, the TUC and the railway trade unions all found against the cuts, but in three separate reports. The independent Chairman issued his own report, but there are indications that he considered it a compromise all the Board's members should have accepted (177).

It will be summarised in some detail because the railway companies eventually suggested accepting it. The Chairman proposed the withdrawal of the cuts imposed two years earlier, and the introduction of smaller ones, to start on the first full pay day after 11 February 1933 and to be for conciliation, clerical and supervisory staff (178). The cuts suggested for conciliation staff were  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on all salaries, with an additional cut of the same percentage for all rates of pay higher than 50s 0d per week. There was a proviso that the cuts should reduce no-one's pay to less than 40s 0d per week. The proposed cuts for clerical and supervisory grades were similar, but expressed in annual terms: the cut was  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on all salaries with an additional  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent for those higher than £125 per annum. The cuts were not to operate on additional payments such as allowances, overtime, payment for night work and Sunday duty (179).

The Association's Executive at least had the satisfaction of the Chairman's acknowledgment that railway workers' wages had been very low at the beginning of the war, and his endorsement of their perception of the settlements of 1919 and 1920 as intended to remedy this situation and set permanent standards. But he did not regard them as irreducible minima. Although departures from them required strong justification, he thought the railway companies had a sufficient case, for they would not be able to raise more capital without offering reasonable dividends. However, railway workers had already made a substantial contribution towards helping the railway companies out of their difficulties and this

cut should be the final one(180).

The railway companies wasted no time. Four days after the meeting at which the Association's Executive discussed the findings, the companies told the three railway unions that they would accept the Chairman's proposals even though they thought the wage cut should have been larger. The Association's Executive asked the other two railway trade unions for a joint meeting with them and also decided to convene a Special Delegate Conference on 6 February to decide on their response to the railway companies(181).

The joint meeting was held on 24 January. ASLEF had already rejected the proposal - the companies' letter had arrived whilst their Executive was in session and able to make an immediate decision. After some debate about a form of words acceptable to all three, the unions agreed on a joint rejection for sending to the railway companies; the Association decided not to proceed with the Special Delegate Conference (182).

#### A New 'Machinery of Negotiation': 1933-35

The railway companies replied to the trade unions on 2 February 1933. They regretted that the unions could not accept the Chairman's report and "they must now proceed to consider afresh the situation thus created." (183); their further response, made on 3 March 1933, was not more pressure for wage cuts, possibly because of some sense that the worst of the depression was over. (184).

Instead of trying to score another goal (that is, achieving some measure of wage cut) they asked for the goal-posts to be moved by modifications in the machinery of negotiation. As laid down by Section 62 of the 1921 Railway Act, they were giving a year's notice that they no

longer wanted to use the whole of its machinery of negotiation. They were satisfied that Sectional Councils and Local Departmental Committees established under the Act were useful and did not want to interfere with them, but they wanted to discuss with the Association other changes they now proposed. All the union Executives wanted to preserve the existing system and the Association's Executive decided to recommend the impending Annual Conference to adopt this as the Association's policy. They also asked the other two unions to convene a meeting, so that a common policy could be determined(185).

As the issue would only become crucial when the year's notice ran out at the beginning of March 1934, it was not intensively pressed during the summer and autumn of 1933. There were meetings between railway company representatives and the executives of the three railway unions on 19 July (186), and eventually, on 7 November (187), a small joint sub-committee was established(188). There were reports of meetings of this sub-committee on 19 December and on 10 January 1934, and other information about its proceedings was passed on from time to time. One item of special interest to the Association was that the management proposed that only the three main railway unions would be recognised in future. This implied the final disposal of competition from organisations such as the North-Eastern Station-masters Association, which had been a threat during the recognition negotiations and in the aftermath of the General Strike (189).

The Railway Act of 1921 specified that the three railway trade unions were to be parties to the Machinery of Negotiation together with the railway companies (190), but the new proposals went further in allotting specific tasks to the railway trade unions, including their headquarters' senior staff. Effectively, no other trade union would be recognised by the railway companies under new proposals unless they were

drastically modified. It soon became evident that the railway companies had two main concerns which they hoped the new machinery of negotiation would satisfy: that 'trivial' matters should not reach too high a level and that the successor to the National Wages Board should hold its meetings in private.

The draft machinery of negotiation, as finally produced, was a thorough 'belt and braces' affair. It over-ensured that the two concerns were thoroughly satisfied, but in ways that meant ordinary trade union members' scope for airing grievances would be severely limited. The trade union representatives could not accept the draft and criticised it in detail. The main burden of their strictures was its formalising of informal procedures. One proposal in particular was a hostage to fortune. Whatever merits union officials might privately have seen in it, the idea that one level of negotiation should be 'Discussion between the Headquarters of Unions and Companies' would have strengthened the hand of dissident trade unionists alert to indications of their representatives' alienation from grass-root members.

Criticisms appear to have been muted on one aspect of the negotiating machinery - the final tribunal. The trade unionists on the joint sub-committee could not accept that its meetings should be in private and said so, but they did not express concern that it was to have a three-man membership and that its decisions were to be binding. Those of the National Wages Board were binding neither on employers nor employees, and it had a very wide membership (191). As the trade unionists singled out some aspects of the new 'final tribunal' for special comment, including the privacy of its proceedings, the absence of immediate and specific criticism of the limited membership and the status of its decisions is remarkable. These matters are fundamental and, one might think, crucial in a sense in which the privacy issue was not. They

became so identified, and were the features most fiercely attacked when it was realised that the companies were not to be persuaded to drop the proposals.

The unions' representatives approved of the present system and concluded that neither the National Wages Board nor anything else should be changed(192). A joint meeting of the three trade unions endorsed their recommendations (193), but the railway companies were not deterred. Talks between them and the unions continued, and differences were not to be quickly resolved, for two main reasons. It would have been very difficult to modify the companies' proposals in ways that would retain their objectives whilst meeting some of the trade unions' criticisms and, because the economy of the railway industry was steadily improving, the trade union and the railway company negotiators were currently involved in talks towards phasing out the 2½ per cent cuts. Their erosion will be discussed later, but the concurrent talks should be kept in mind as part of the background to the establishment of new negotiating machinery.

There are reports of six meetings between the railway companies and the union delegates in the summer of 1934, between mid-April and mid-September(194). At times, both sides showed impatience at the rate of progress; on 12 July the unions reported a deadlock to the Ministry of Labour(195), and on 16 September the railway companies informed the Association that they had given notice that they would accept no findings of the Central Wages Board made after 3 March 1934 (196). But by the end of 1934, agreement was in sight. The final meeting of the negotiators was held on 17 January 1935, and both teams of negotiators recommended that the amended machinery of negotiation be accepted by the railway companies and the three trade unions (197).

The trade unions had decided that their negotiating efforts would be concentrated on four aspects of the draft Machinery of Negotiation. These were:

- (a) Constitution of the final tribunal.
- (b) Publicity of its proceedings.
- (c) Compulsory acceptance of its findings (i. e. to be resisted; the importance of this issue had, at last, been recognised).
- (d) Freedom of reference. (i. e. either side must be able to refer any claims to the final tribunal) (198)

The unions' efforts are best judged by how far they achieved their aims on these issues. The final tribunal remained the three-man body that the railway companies proposed(199) - but each railway trade union which had an issue before the tribunal could nominate an 'assessor' and the railway companies could nominate an equal number of 'assessors'. These assessors could be present during the tribunal hearings, could put questions through the chairman to elucidate factual matters and could be asked for their advice by the tribunal, but otherwise were not to interfere in its hearings and were not to sign its decisions(200).

This is certainly a concession of the unions' point (a), but only the working of the machinery would determine how valuable it would be. On point (b), 'Publicity of its proceedings', the implications of the modifications which had been achieved were even less clear-cut. The relevant paragraph in the revised machinery of negotiation reads, "Hearings before the Railway Staff National Tribunal shall be private to the parties unless otherwise agreed by the parties or, failing agreement, unless otherwise decided by the Tribunal". The phrase "unless otherwise decided by the Tribunal" was the unions' addition and it only slightly improved the chances that the Tribunal's proceedings would be less than totally private. However, the constitutional provision for assessors

meant that the Tribunal's proceedings would be more open than the managers had first proposed. A three-man tribunal, whose proceedings were supposed to be private, would have more chance of keeping them so than would a body augmented by up to six assessors - so many more people to gossip. The unions were completely successful on their point (c): a clause that, "Decisions of the Railway Staff National Tribunal, whether unanimous or by a majority, shall be binding upon the parties to any agreed reference" was dropped and no reference was made to the status of the tribunal's decisions.

The most difficult aspect of the amended machinery to evaluate is point (d). The railway managements proposed a number of procedures to inhibit progression up the hierarchy of tribunals, so a number of modifications were required to satisfy the trade unions. They negotiated changes to over a dozen paragraphs of the draft proposals, often to the end of ensuring that a member's grievance could reach a high enough level for adequate treatment by the unions' standards - again, only experience in using the machinery would show how successfully the modifications fitted the bill.

The new procedures were certainly not as satisfactory for the unions as those prescribed in the 1921 Railway Act, but within the limits of their power the unions had achieved a reasonable compromise. Even so, they were not able to modify paragraphs such as 18 and 19 of the Memorandum of Agreement.

Paragraph 18.

"In no circumstances shall there be any withdrawal of labour or any attempt on the part of employees to hamper the proper working of the Railway, until any matter in the dispute has been submitted through the proper channels to the higher Management, or, if such matter is within the scope of the Machinery of Negotiation, until the provisions thereof have been fully utilised."

Paragraph 19.

"In the event of individuals withdrawing their labour or hampering the proper working of the Railway in contravention of the provisions of Clause 18 hereof the Railway Trade Union shall not afford them any support, but shall use their best endeavours to induce such individuals to conform to this Agreement." (201)

Agreeing the the new negotiating machinery may have promoted a relationship between the unions and the companies that was helpful for securing the unions' exclusive rights of representation, but paragraphs 18 and 19 imply that they were to some extent to act as agents of management. They might, conceivably, find themselves forced by this agreement to act contrary to members' perceived interests: it also left an obstacle to be overcome should the Association become more disposed to militancy. A joint meeting of the three railway trade unions approved the amended version of the machinery of negotiation on 21 January 1935; a few outstanding points were clarified the following day and the procedures were finally accepted (202).

By the 17 February, the Association's Executive had received some responses from the union's branches. Banbury, Barrow and Pontypool congratulated them, but Bradford No. 1, Dundee No. 1, Keighley and Reading were critical and thought that a special conference should have been called before the new procedures were accepted (203). The NUR's acceptance did wait upon a Special General Meeting held in London on 20 February. After approval by a vote of 47 to 32, formal agreement took place on 26 February, with effect from 1 March 1935 (204).

The trade unions' Executives were well aware that the new negotiating machinery was less favourable to the unions than that prescribed by the 1921 Railway Act. It is difficult to know what judgement to make at this point. Memories of the General Strike were still fresh, and, although the economy was improving it still offered



nothing to be turned to the unions' advantage; it is unlikely that they could have made a better bargain. The real test of the unions' mettle would come when they used the new procedures, but with a second World War soon to overtake events, the evidence for a conclusive judgement was never presented.

#### Restoration of the Pay Cuts: A Beginning: 1934

Economic improvement has already been suggested as the railway companies' likely reason for addressing negotiation procedures rather than continuing to press for wage cuts. There was sufficient evidence of it by the Spring of 1934 for the unions to decide that they might reasonably ask for existing cuts to be abolished.

The Association arranged a meeting with the other two railway unions on 10 April. It began with the Executive reading the riot act to the others for having already asked the railway companies to repeal the cuts, without waiting for a meeting to co-ordinate their efforts. The other unions were quite willing to coordinate their negotiations, saying that they in fact preferred to do so. Their early action had, however, cleared the way for a process that was going to be protracted. The new London Passenger Transport Board was not prepared to begin negotiations until the end of its first year's working in August, but the NUR had arranged to meet the main-line railway companies. Although Walkden thought that it was too early to ask for complete abolition of the cuts, he favoured the Association's cooperation with the other unions (205). Their first joint meeting with the railway companies only elicited that the companies would need more time for consideration (206).

The railway unions' negotiating teams' preoccupation with the new negotiating machinery meant that it was 12 July before they had their

first meeting on the wage cuts. They decided to ask for another meeting with the General Managers of the Main Line Railway Companies, and for the the London Passenger Transport Board to abolish their cuts, as their economic position had improved considerably(207).

Their first meeting with the railway managers took place on 20 July and was not very productive. The railway managers said that their economic position did not warrant complete abolition, but hinted that a partial easement would be possible. They also suggested that the matter should be referred to arbitration. The NUR and ASLEF said that they would need to consult their Delegate Conference before discussing a partial restoration of the wage cut (208).

The three unions met again to co-ordinate their negotiating stance on the morning of the 8 August; they were to meet the railway managers again the following day. The NUR and ASLEF had originally put forward claims regarding overtime, Sunday duty, and other matters as well as the restoration of the wage cuts; it was decided to drop these supplementary issues and concentrate on the removal of the initial 2½ per cent cut which affected all railway workers. ASLEF said they would need to consult their Delegate Conference again before agreeing to this change in negotiating tactics (209), but they must have had it on hand as they were able to ensure negotiating unanimity by 9.30 the following morning(210). The unions also agreed to ask the London Passenger Transport Board to hold a joint meeting the following month to discuss the cuts, but the Board wanted to wait until February 1935(211).

The unions met the railway management again 9 August. The managers initially claimed to be in no position to restore the cuts; they said the unions should either submit their case to arbitration or wait until February, when the financial situation would be clearer. The Association suggested, probably with collective tongue in cheek, that the case should

be arbitrated by the National Wages Board as the body which had originated the cuts - a provocative suggestion when, at the railway companies' instigation, the parties to the discussions about the cuts were pursuing parallel discussions about abolishing the National Wages Board. The railway managers, surprisingly, took up the suggestion, but the NUR and ASLEF would have none of it - they wanted something straight away. They then stated the collective claim, which was for the first 2½ per cent deduction to be abolished, the second 2½ per cent deduction to stand, and the arrangement to take effect from 1 September.

The railway managers rejected the claim, but were willing to drop the second 2½ per cent on earnings over 40/- per week (or £100 per annum) because this would cost less; they were also prepared to ease conditions for those earning 40/- to 45/- per week (212). The unions pressed hard, but the only adjustment they could make was an alteration of the time-scale over which the second 2½ per cent should be eroded. In the end it was agreed that it would be reduced to 1½ per cent from 1 October, and abolished after 1 January 1935 (213).

On 11 September the London Passenger Transport Board also agreed to abolish their second 2½ per cent cut in two stages. This was in line with the main line railway companies (214), but their finances improved so rapidly that they were able to abolish all their wage cuts much earlier. In December they announced that their 'first' 2½ per cent would be removed in two stages, 1½ per cent after 1 April next, and the rest from the 1 June. So, by June 1935, the London Passenger Transport Board no longer cut their employees' wages (215).

This settlement for the LPTB led to increased demands from members and the other unions that the main-line Companies' cuts should be removed (216), but it took some time for the unions to organise a joint approach (217). In May, ASLEF's Annual Assembly of Delegates resolved

that all steps should be taken to remove the final 2½ per cent (218), but it was September before there was another joint union meeting.

Restoration of the Pay Cuts; The Final Phase and Some Real  
Improvements; 1935-37

By now, the negotiating machinery had been changed, the London Passenger Transport Board's cuts were a memory and the main-line companies' second 2½ per cent cut was old news; it was time to erode the last wage cut. The railway trade unions arranged to meet the Railway Staff Conference on 22 October 1935. All the main-line railway companies were represented on this body: its existence was formalised by the new Machinery of Negotiation. The management side said at the October meeting that they could recommend no further alteration in the wage cuts because the net railway revenue for 1935 was not expected to be much different from that for 1934. That figure was £6 million less than the revenue for 1930(219), the basis of the cuts imposed under National Wages Board Decision No.119. Dissatisfied, the unions asked for a meeting with the General Managers (220), which took place on 7 January 1936. The railway companies were then prepared to compromise, as were the NUR and the Association; but it was nine days before ASLEF agreed to join them (221). (ASLEF's reservations protracted this phase of the negotiations and were a portent of future disunity amongst the railway unions).

On 10 March the railway companies offered £500,000 towards easing the cuts and made two suggestions as to how it could be expended (222). It may appear a strange concession by the General Managers, after what had been said at the Railway Staffs Conference the previous October. It was not simply that the General Managers reserved to themselves the right to offer what 'goodies' were available. Although the railway industry's

net revenue was lower in both 1934 and 1935 than it had been in 1930, there had been changes that made the railway companies better able to manage without cutting their employees' wages. The industry had become more efficient, with the Southern Railway's electrification of many of its suburban lines, some electrification around Manchester and Tyneside, and the use of larger, more powerful locomotives on long-distance routes (223). The 'Pooling Agreements', already mentioned as a source of concern that some of the Association's members might lose their jobs(224), had probably led to some savings. The Government responded to the discovery of the effects of road transport on the railways; and one particular statutory measure gave the railways a much-needed opportunity to stabilize some of their traffic. The Local Government Act of 1929 provided for them to be relieved of three-quarters of the rates levied on them, on condition that the savings were used to reduce the rates for the carriage of various goods: agricultural produce; coal, coke and patent fuel either for export or to be used in iron and steel works; raw materials for the manufacture of iron and steel (225). Possibly as a result of the consequential review of the railways' liability to pay local rates it was discovered that they had been over-assessed since April 1931, so the four main-line railway companies eventually found themselves with rate rebates of £12,993,558 (226). This alone would have made easing the wage cut much less of a financial problem.

The unions offered an alternative to the companies' two suggestions of 10 March; on 25 March the companies sent them back with a few modifications. The Association wanted to accept at this stage, because the offer now differed little from its own proposals(227). The other Executives decided to consult their members, but recommended acceptance to them(228).

By June, the union conferences were over and the three executives

could decide how to proceed. The NUR's Special Delegate Meeting had instructed their Executive to negotiate for a better deal and to report back before making a decision, but they did not reject the General Managers' offer. ASLEF's Conference decided that it was inadequate and that the wage cut should be removed. They also decided that a number of improvements to their conditions should be included in the next phase of negotiations, and that these should be pressed through the negotiating machinery. The ASLEF Executive had opposed being mandated to these proposals by their conference, but had been over-ruled. They still wanted to be included in the joint negotiations, but could not modify their position. The Association's Conference had supported its Executive in trying to persuade the railway companies to pay railway employees their full wages (229).

The divisions amongst the railway unions made the General Managers' task easier when they next met the unions on 12 June. All three unions pressed for an improvement in the companies' offer of 25 March, but the companies refused to budge and said that unless the three unions accepted their offer unanimously, the matter would have to take its course through the negotiating machinery (230). The managers would have realised that the differences between the unions would make it difficult for them to present a good case. Added to this, one of the railway chairmen regretted the offer of 25 March and thought that the General Managers should ask the Railway Staff National Tribunal for further reductions in pay (231).

The two other unions tried to persuade ASLEF to recall their conference, so that the three unions could accept the companies' offer, but the ASLEF Executive said this could not be done (232). Because the railway managers insisted on unanimity of acceptance the NUR and the Association had no alternative but to take the case through the new

negotiating machinery(233). It passed through the Railway Staff National Council on 18 June and was considered by the Railway Staff National Tribunal between 15 and 20 July(234). The Tribunal's decision, its first one, is dated 27 July, and gave the railway workers more than the railway managers offered. The cut was reduced to 14 per cent, but some cuts in overtime rates were also restored. The decision was accepted by both the NUR and the Association(235). The new rates were to operate for a year from 16 August, after which they could be further modified either by agreement or formal negotiation.

ASLEF negotiated its separate claims later in the year. None was conceded, but Decision No.1 of the Railway Staff National Tribunal applied to the union's members (236). Although Decision No.2, dated 29th December, 1936, turned down ASLEF's claims, it made an important concession of principle; "If the improvement in the net revenues of the railways continued, railway employees could obtain a share in the improvement without waiting for the large increase in railway profits that would be required before the Standard Revenue (£51,359,095) can be reached" (237).

The Railway Staff National Tribunal Decision No.1 had stipulated that wages should remain as they were for a year, but it was tacitly agreed that negotiations should begin once the 1936 railway returns were available; the railways' net revenue for 1936 did show an increase, so at least this portion of the unions' negotiating argument would be favourable(238).

The three unions arranged for a joint meeting to be held on 12 March when, it was hoped, a combined negotiating position could be organised. This year, negotiations were to be addressed not only to the remaining cuts, but all three unions were also presenting claims for improvements to wages and conditions. The Association had five claims:

Cessation of the 1¼ per cent deduction.  
Special increases in pay for those for whom promotion is not available. (Also called allowance for stagnation).  
Reduction of hours of duty to a 36 hour week.  
Extra payment for time worked between 6.00 pm and 6.00 am. Time off in lieu of work on Bank and Public Holidays. (239).

The discussion which followed the presentation of the unions' programmes laid down ground rules for the next phase of combined pay negotiations. Previously, this had not been thought necessary, but earlier negotiations had been principally concerned with the removal of the wage cuts. Although a remnant of these remained, the next negotiations would concentrate on specific improvements and, as each union catered for people doing different types of work, they had different priorities. There was another reason for the ground rules - the memory of the previous year's negotiations was still fresh, with awareness of the effects of the disunity displayed by the unions.

The ground rules were that each union would consider the proposals of the others and that if general agreement were not reached on all items in the three separate programmes, each union should be free to submit its own; and that the proposals of all three unions should be submitted on the same date, to be agreed between the General Secretaries(240).

The item about 'stagnation' in the Association's 'short programme' (the term used to distinguish it from the comprehensive programme that covered its wider and longer-term policy) needs further explanation. The Association's members had long pressed for such a provision. Many of them spent all their working lives in the lowest clerical grade, because they worked where there was no scope for promotion. It was argued that extra pay was justified for them after they had spent a substantial time in the grade. The problem became more acute between the wars because, although it was especially likely to be manifest at small, remote



locations, one of the largest concentrations of clerks in London had been beset by it since the war. This was the Railway Clearing House(241), set up early in the history of the railways to apportion payment for the transport of goods and passengers amongst the railway companies over whose lines they were carried(242). After 1922, when the many railway companies were reduced to four, the Clearing House's work was drastically reduced and became less complex, resulting in less scope for promotion. Eventually, the companies were to recognise the Clearing House's problems with a scheme for stagnation compensation and the Association was to attempt to try to generalise from the Clearing House scheme(243).

The joint claim, which included the Association's programme, was discussed only briefly in a preliminary meeting with the railway companies. It was set on its course through the negotiating machinery soon after the joint union meeting on 12 March 1937, ending at the Railway Staff National Tribunal in July 1937. During this tribunal's hearings, the Railway Rates Tribunal announced (on July 28th) its agreement to the railway companies' request to raise their charges by 5 per cent(244). The railway companies' expectation would have been that this would increase the revenue available to them; its immediate effect would be to persuade the members of the RSNT that they could view the union's case with some generosity. There were other grounds for supposing that the railway companies were becoming more prosperous, for 1936 was the third consecutive year that the railway revenue account showed a net increase. It should be remarked here that the increase in charges did not have the hoped-for effect: they came into operation on 1 October 1937, and the net revenue figure for 1938 fell by nearly £9 million. For the LNER this was the worst inter-war year(245). However, the Railway Staff National Tribunal's only evidence on railway revenue was optimistic, but even so they were not over-generous. The most

notable feature of their decision was that the railways could once more be happy in the knowledge that they were honest employers who paid their employees their full wages. The 1½ per cent deduction ceased as from 16 August 1937, exactly a year after it was reduced from 2½ per cent.

The Association only succeeded with two items of the rest of its programme. Members who were required to work on Whit-Monday or August Bank Holiday were to receive a day off in lieu with pay for each day worked; this appears to be the beginning of a railway institution known as 'compensatory leave'. The Association's other success was that clerks who were required to work throughout the night hours between 10 pm and 4 am were to be relieved of one turn of duty for every fifteen turns worked. If relief was not feasible, there was to be a day's pay in lieu(246). The settlement was the Railway Staff National Tribunal's Decision No. 3, and it also restored the pre-1931 overtime rates (247). All its awards came into effect on the 16 August 1937.

#### Assessment, Improvements and Prospects: 1937-1939

The tribunal's decision marked the end of the wage cuts which had lasted for over seven years(248), during which time the negotiating efforts of the three railway trade unions had been largely concentrated on removing them. The Association's Executive were now in a position to start thinking about real improvements in the working conditions of their members. There were two major constraints on this: 1938 was to be a very poor financial year for the railway industry and the second World War was visibly on the horizon. But whilst the uncertainty engendered by the increasing expectation of war was a constraint on serious long-term plans, one aspect of war preparations acted as a spur to wage negotiations. This was a rise in the cost of living which was so evident

by October 1938, as to merit a short debate at that month's Executive meeting(249).

The Association's current programme of pay and conditions had been devised in 1930(250) during the brief interregnum between the two wage cuts. One item that illustrates its character as an expression of hope for better times to come is its 'category 12, (hours of duty)' which states that a week's work should be no more than 38 hours. Railway clerks' standard working week was 48 hours, and they had to wait until 1947 before it was reduced, and then only to 42 hours(251).

The programme could not be used as a basis for general negotiations in the late 1930s, but in April 1937 it was submitted to the London Passenger Transport Board. This was not quite as irrational as it may appear. The Board had given up its wage cut two years earlier, and was in a stronger economic position than the main-line railway companies; as has been explained, its business was mostly passenger transport and Londoners maintained their long-established tendency to move further towards the peripheries of London, and away from the centre where they worked(252). Work in London tended to be clerical work in administration, commerce, and business, and was less affected by unemployment than the manufacturing industries, for whose needs the main-line railways catered.

Changes in the location of industry during the 1930s also contributed towards the Board's prosperity. With rapid growth in the use of electricity, industry could tap energy anywhere in the country and was no longer constrained to stay close to the coal-fields; new industries tended to be located near their larger markets. They were often concerned with consumer goods such as cars and household machinery, and their markets were the bigger conurbations. London, as the largest, acquired a sizable number of factories producing consumer goods. But despite its relative prosperity, the Board rejected the Association's

programme, saying that none of its items nor anything else could be considered until the main-line railway companies learned the decision of the Railway Staff National Tribunal, which was made in August 1937(253).

Any members of the Association's Executive who were not already convinced that the 1930 Programme needed revision would have been persuaded by now, so a revised version was prepared and also, perhaps more importantly, a new 'short programme' was devised (254). The Executive recommended that it should be confined to proposals for improvements in salaries, special payments and conditions for night workers(255). Draft programmes were ready in November 1937, and were circulated to the branches who were told that a special delegate conference would be held in February, 1938, to produce a definitive version.

Although the London Passenger Transport Board had rejected the Association's programme - and one from the NUR at the same time(256) - the railway unions considered it to be the section of the railway industry with the best prospects for improving workers' pay and conditions. So, after the Annual Report of the LPTB was available, the three unions met on 11 November to consider the possibilities. John Marchbank, for the NUR, said that the figures submitted by the Board did not justify resubmitting the programmes, but that some progress might ensue if the unions took up a suggestion from Frank Pick (Vice Chairman of the LPTB) that they drop their programmes and negotiate on specific issues(257). On 30 November, the Association was advised by a meeting of its members who worked for the Board that it should aim for a flat-rate increase and salaried-staff status for women ticket clerks(258).

The three unions had a number of meetings with officers of the London Passenger Transport Board in January and February 1938, and signed an agreement at the end of February. They began on 3 January by

withdrawing their programmes, substituting specific claims. The Association's five proposals included time off in lieu of work on Bank Holidays, pay and conditions for special groups, and pay increases for most of the Association's members who worked for the Board(259). The proposals were lengthy, but the Association's negotiators seem to have tried to cover every possible case. The Board's officers undertook to respond to the claims at a meeting in three weeks' time

It was on 25th January; Frank Pick reported that the Board was prepared to improve the wages of the lowest paid grades and also to improve trainmen's conditions, especially in regard to 'spreadover' turns. The main offer on the Association's proposals was that the women ticket clerks' work would be examined with a view to regrading. The Board was prepared to grant a day off in lieu for work performed on Whit Monday and August Bank Holiday - this was something main-line Association members already enjoyed - but not to improve clerical and supervisory workers' salaries, as Board's salaried staffs' pay and grading were better than for equivalent main-line staff. Walkden said that Pick had not put forward any arguments to overturn the Association's case so he concluded that it would be possible to go back to the Board if a similar approach were also made to the main-line companies. Frank Pick offered the unions the opportunity to discuss enlargement of the Board's London Area, which carried some extra pay weighting, but with nothing to be agreed unless the main-line companies also enlarged their areas(260). When the unions learned the details of what the LPTB proposed, W.J.R. Squance, for ASLEF, said that his union was thinking of rejecting the Board's offer. In the event it did not, but added a dissenting paragraph to the Memorandum of Agreement(261). W. Stott, for the Association, said that it wanted to do as much as possible for the women ticket clerks, but intended to submit its 'short programme' to the Board and the main-line

companies at the same time(262).

The Memorandum of Agreement between <sup>the</sup> Board and the unions was signed on the 28 February. Its most important aspect, as far as the subsequent history of railway pay negotiations is concerned, is that the minimum weekly wage of the lowest paid grade was raised first to 50s.0d, backdated to January 1938, and then to 52s 0d with effect from 1 January 1939. Women clerks at Chiswick and the senior women clerks at the other locations were the only ones whose work was deemed to justify admission to salaried status. Other pay increases were for motormen (the underground railway's term for train-drivers) whose minimum weekly pay went up to 78s 0d, a rate which was not to be achieved by main-line drivers until October 1939(263), but ASLEF's aspiration for something even better was shown by the dissenting rider to its formal agreement(264).

The Association's short programme went to the board and the main-line companies in May 1938. On 15 July, Frank Pick said the Board was still considering it(265). Stott met him in December, 1938, and was told that the Board's financial circumstances were better than those of the main-line companies, but not strong enough for it to introduce the Association's short programme. He said that the Association should await the Railway Staff National Tribunal's decision on it; a favourable decision from the Tribunal would support the case for the Association's members who worked for the Board. There would still be a case if the Tribunal decided that improved conditions should wait upon improvements in the main-line companies' finances, but Pick would have to reject the short programme out of hand if asked for an immediate reply(266). The Railway Staff National Tribunal rejected it, as will be seen, but Pick offered stagnation allowances the which the Association accepted(267).

The offer was that £10 per annum should be added to the pay of Class

5 men and 2s 6d per week to that of Class 2 women who had been their grades for five years (268). The Executive Committee wanted the award extended to booking clerks and women ticket clerks, and also wanted improved rates for night work. Pick said that it could not be extended, but he would recommend that the Board accept the claim for night duty subject to the concurrence of the main-line companies(269). The negotiations were still in progress in July 1939, on the eve of the War. Wartime conditions made profound changes to many aspects of civilian life and wage negotiations had their share of change. At the beginning of 1940, railway salaried staff had their pay increased by £10 per annum and in June, 1940, another £8 was added to this advance (270).

Despite the fate of the Association's short programme, there was some progress on stagnation for some other members of the Association as well as those at the London Passenger Transport Board. These were clerks at the Railway Clearing House, where the problem was especially pressing. They were offered their stagnation scheme in September 1938, but one element in it was more like the LNER's accelerated retirement scheme than the London Passenger Transport Board's stagnation scheme. The offer of £10 per annum for Class 5 clerks who had not been promoted was a less generous offer than the Board's similar provision, because Clearing House clerks who qualified for it had to be over 39 years old and individually eligible for promotion. The accelerated retirement provision was that employees who were 57 years old or over could ask for leave with pay prior to retirement. Their pre-retirement pay would be equal to the pension they would receive at the age of 60 (their normal retirement age in 1938) and a lump sum equal to the employee's contribution to the Superannuation Fund would be paid out when he left. It was hoped that the scheme would make room for promoting clerks who had spent a long time on Grade 5; if early retirement was taken by all the higher-grade clerks

who qualified for it there would be scope for 283 promotions. The Association decided to participate in the scheme (271).

Although it was important for clerks at the Railway Clearing House, they represented only a small part of the Association's membership. The main thrust of the Association's negotiating efforts in the few years immediately prior to the war was, of course, to improve conditions for the majority of their members who worked for the four main-line railway companies. The drafts of the two new programmes which were devised to specify the required improvements were debated at a Special Delegate Conference in London over the weekend of 12 and 13 February 1938. The Conference was scheduled to consider the revised version of the standard programme and the new short programme. It spent most of its time on the short programme, but three items were quarried from the standard programme and added to the Executive's draft of the short version. These concerned hours of duty (i.e. asking for a 40 hour week), unappointed clerks and annual holidays (272). The Executive were most concerned by the addition of the item on the length of the working week, as they were worried that the NUR and ASLEF would not support it (273).

The standard programme was never debated in detail by a delegate conference, so it remained a draft programme, but the Special Conference used it to augment the Executive's draft short programme. Two features of the 1938 draft standard programme may explain why it was left in draft. These are its specifications for an age scale ending at 28 years and for a common salary scale for male clerks, women clerks, station-masters, agents, and traffic controllers. Neither of them was in the 1938 short programme, which reverted to the style of the current agreement which had been negotiated in 1919. In 1918 many of the members liked long age-scales and argued for one that extended to 42 years of age, as Association policy (274). This may have been their response to



stagnation, but the Executive did not like it in 1918 and by 1938 were trying to make age-scales even shorter. The general salary scale appears to be an attempt to get equal pay for women and a standard approach to all members whatever their grade. It was probably felt that persuading the railway companies to accept the two proposed innovations as well as increased pay and better conditions was too optimistic, and politic for the programme to remain in draft form for the time being.

The three unions held a joint meeting on 4 May 1938, to consider their programmes and to agree a joint approach to the railway companies. The two other unions detailed their programmes(275) and the Association said it was to submit a version of the short programme. As the Executive expected, the item that excited the most interest was the claim for a 40 hour week. The NUR thought it should be dropped, but the Association's representatives said that it must stand, as it had been agreed by a delegate conference(276).

The Association submitted its programme to the Railway Staffs Conference on 20 May(277). Before the three trade unions' claims reached the final tribunal, representatives of the four main-line railway companies asked the unions to meet them. By the time of the meeting, 12 October, it was evident how poor a year 1938 would be, with receipts for the first 39 weeks at £44 million less than in 1937; the managers estimated the cost of the Association's claim at £3,262,000(278). The NUR had already estimated that their claim would cost £5 million per annum(279); the managers' estimate of the combined claims was £6½ million, and they asked the unions to drop them (280). The unions now knew how strongly their their claims would be opposed, but they continued to press them through the negotiating machinery.

On 8 November, representatives of the three unions met the General Managers of the four main-line companies and their principal assistants.

For the companies, it was said that 1938 was going to be a very poor year. The returns showed that the first half of the year was the most disastrous since 1926 and the net revenue for 1938 was unlikely to reach £30 million. (They were right - it did not reach £29 million(281). If management's predictions turned out to be correct, they would have to cut their costs. The unions' General Secretaries said they would nevertheless be proceeding with their claims at the Railway Staff National Council the following week (282).

The Meeting of the Railway Staff National Council was held on 14 November. The Association withdrew two items in its claim; one was on the extension of the London area, withdrawn on the understanding that the companies would discuss the whole question. The Companies did not want a blanket increase in the qualified area, but were prepared to consider selected localities, one example being Enfield. The other item was that the designation 'Unappointed Clerks' should be dropped; it was withdrawn on the understanding that there would be thorough and sympathetic discussions about giving all clerks appointed status (283).

At a meeting on 23 November, the unions decided to submit all their claims to the Railway Staff National Tribunal early in the New Year; the actual date was 24 January, 1939. The decision of the RSNT (Decision No.5) was delivered on 28 February, and made only two concessions: a minimum of 3 hours' payment for workers called out on Sunday and some limits on spreadover (sometimes known as 'split') turns - these related to two of the NUR's claims and one of ASLEF's. The Association's short programme was completely rejected(284). The NUR decided to pursue the claim for a minimum wage of 50s 0d a week(285). They had some hope of success, because this was the minimum conceded by the London Passenger Transport Board a year earlier, and now risen to 52s 0d(286). ASLEF

decided to continue to pursue its separate claims without modification (287).

#### Normal Negotiations Suspended; 1939

During the Spring and Summer of 1939 it became increasingly evident that there was going to be a war. Rearmament had become official Government policy in 1934 and began in earnest in 1935 (288). The work of Air Raid Precautions (ARP) had also begun in 1935, and in 1937 local authorities were put under duties to establish ARP facilities (289). In April 1939, for the first time ever in peacetime, the Government introduced military conscription. It may have appeared a modest proposal, in that all men aged 20 and 21 were to undergo six months military training (290), but in most cases the six months lasted until 1945 or 1946.

The active preparations for war which began in the middle of the 1930s developed gradually, and such activities as the establishment of 'shadow aircraft factories' or rearmament in general had no apparent effect on railway finances until the second quarter of 1939, but thereafter it was dramatic. Traffic receipts were a quarter of a million pounds a week greater than those of a year earlier (291). ASLEF continued to press its claims, and the railway companies' reluctance to grant a minimum weekly wage of 50s 0d must have been incomprehensible to the NUR. As the Association sorted out its affairs against a background of changing conditions, the ordering of priorities became important, and one was the NUR's claim. The Association had been a party to the London

Passenger Transport Board's agreement of February 1938, which included conciliation staff, and recognised that equity demanded a similar minimum wage for their main-line equivalents. A spokesman for the railway companies had pointed out at the Railway Staff National Tribunal in August 1937<sup>2</sup> that although some clerks earned less than 50s 0d a week the Association was not asking for a rise in their wages(292). These were Class 5 clerks aged 22 or less whose pay would rise with their age. Conciliation staff on less than 50s 0d a week would remain below it unless they were promoted.

The Association's Conference of May 1939 agreed that the short programme should not be pursued for the moment, but expressed sympathy for the NUR's claim for the minimum wage(293). When the Association's Executive and the other unions met the General Managers on 30 June to consider 'labour costs', they reported their Conference's decision; ASLEF were still pursuing their original claim and the NUR were concentrating on the minimum wage. The General Managers said that after consideration, they would call another meeting(294).

In acquiescing in the RSNT Decision No. 5, the Association did not stop attempting to improve their members' conditions. As hinted previously, their decision was probably partly motivated by the realisation that the war was imminent and that it would be difficult to proceed with its programme under changing conditions. It was more realistic to concentrate on immediate problems and offer a helping hand to the larger union, whose limited objective should be more capable of realisation. An idea of the issues they continued to pursue can be gathered from the minutes of a meeting of the Railway Staff Conference (i.e. management representatives and representatives of the NUR and the Association)(295). They were copied and circulated to the membership on 5 May 1939, perhaps for the same reasons that make them of special interest

today.

One issue which was debated was the problem of 'Unappointed Clerks', one of the items dropped from the short programme at the Railway Staff National Council level on 8 November 1938. At the meeting with the Railway Staff Conference some of the promised 'thorough and sympathetic' discussion took place, but nothing was decided. It was not to be expected that any decision would emerge, given the nature of the meeting - that is, as part of the procedures through which continuous dialogue was, and is, maintained as a feature of the relationship between railway trade unions and railway managers. Other topics were also discussed, and an especially interesting item dealt with Air Raid Precautions(ARP), national service and conscription. The companies had no answers to questions about protection, evacuation or volunteering for ARP or other forms of national service, but they said they would soon be issuing a statement. They were also questioned about what would happen to superannuation allowances, reinstatement, insurances and mortgages for men called up as Reservists, Volunteers, Territorials or Conscripts - and had the same reply.

This meeting is of special interest because it demonstrated transformation from peacetime conditions to readiness for war, and how far it had gone by May 1939. The NUR and the Association appear to have reacted to the current climate by either limiting their immediate wage claim or temporarily dropping it. But ASLEF had made no such adjustment, and behaved as though nothing was changing. Their attitude seems to have created a rift between them and the other two unions. The ASLEF Executive must have been made impatient by constantly being told - to paraphrase a catch-phrase that was to become all too common later - "don't you know there's a war coming", and by now, they were contemplating a strike. On 10 August, ASLEF's representatives met

railway company representatives separately by their own choice, not wanting a meeting which included the other two unions (296).

Their mood would have been sharpened because the NUR had obtained part of its claim. At a meeting between the three unions and the General Managers on 28 July, it was announced that the minimum rate for conciliation staff was raised to 45s 0d per week (297). A subsequent Special General Meeting of the NUR, held on 11 August, 1939, had decided to continue to press for the minimum wage, but not to call for a strike, and thanked the Association for dropping its claim and supporting the NUR's (298).

The NUR and the Association met the General Managers again on August 14th. John Marchbank, for the NUR, said that his General Meeting was still pressing for a 50s 0d minimum; the managers replied that their financial position would not allow them to increase the minimum of 45s 0d which had recently been conceded. W. Stott, for the Association, said it was not pressing its claims further and had expressed sympathy with the NUR. But he said that if anything more was conceded, then, in view of the comments made at the RSNT, the Association's claim for night duty deserved to be considered; and that the Railway Clearing House's 'numbertaking' staff suffered from very unsatisfactory conditions (299).

There had been some question of ASLEF's claim going to arbitration. Both Stott and Marchbank were opposed; it would be an extension of the machinery of negotiation and might erode its basic principles. It is not clear what was implied, but their conversation appears to have killed any idea of arbitration. The managers said they had told ASLEF that the claim could not be met but that it could be taken back to the RSNT. On 16 August they amplified this, telling ASLEF's representatives that if they wanted the Railway Staff National Tribunal to be reconvened on the grounds that circumstances had changed since January, then the General

Managers would expedite a meeting of the Tribunal (300).

This does not appear to have satisfied ASLEF, because a strike was planned for 26 August (301). War was little more than a week away and preparations for it, involving intensive use of the railways, were well in hand. ASLEF was called to the Ministry of Labour on 25 August and subsequently called off the strike (302). In a few days' time, starting on 1 September, 3,823 special trains were to evacuate over a million and a quarter school children with their teachers and some other adults such as pregnant women and nursing mothers (303).

The NUR's claim for a 50s 0d minimum went to the Railway Staff National Council on 29 August, (304) and then, together with an ASLEF claim for increased pay, to the Railway Staff National Tribunal. The NUR got its award, but at 50s 0d only for London. There was a minimum of 48s 0d in industrial areas and 47s 0d in rural areas, the corresponding rates for women being 38s 0d, 36s 6d, and 35s 0d. The minimum weekly rate for engine drivers was increased from 72s 0d to 78s 0d. This decision, Number 6, dated 10 October, 1939, settled this last peacetime claim heard by the Tribunal; after that, wartime conditions were in force (305).

The distinction between pay decisions in peacetime and wartime arises because peacetime pay is supposed to reflect normal, market conditions. As has been related, the railway clerical staff's pay for the whole of the inter-war period was based on an agreement negotiated in 1919. Despite the cuts that were made from time to time, the agreement of 1919 remained the basis for wages and subsequent negotiations. Wartime economic conditions are exceptional; responses to them are thought of as short-term. The 'War Bonuses' of the first World War were expedients designed so that the workers could cope with wartime inflation; they had their parallels in the second World War's 'War Advance'. The awards made under RSNT Decision No. 6 derived from

peacetime claims and were considered to be peacetime decisions, not special expedients, but they were made when railway revenues already reflected wartime conditions: the passage of what were technically peacetime claims had been that much easier (306).

In concluding this chapter, we should attempt to address two questions: what was the Association's distinctive contribution to collective bargaining in the railway industry? What difference did trade union collective bargaining make to railway clerical workers' wages? The first question arises because the three rail unions negotiated jointly through a common bargaining structure, and it may appear from the record that the largest union, the NUR, played the dominant role on the trade union side. Whereas ASLEF frequently appeared willing to break away from the joint-union position, the Association seemed to be a subordinate ally of the NUR. However, the Association made distinctive contributions to the unions' joint action at a number of points: for example Walkden suggested the original pay cut should be 2% per cent, and on other occasions the Association made its sectional or otherwise distinctive attitude clear. Most of the time the three unions worked in concert to prevent wage cuts, minimise them or restore them. In this situation it was difficult for the Association to advance the particular interests of its members.

The second question raises complex issues in labour economics. The evidence of the erosion of clerical differentials between 1914 and 1924 (307) does suggest that collective bargaining strength brought some relative gains to railway clerks. The evidence is by no means conclusive; the rapid wartime and immediate post-war inflation, combined with clerical labour shortages between 1914 and 1920 were certainly important factors that need to be taken into account. On the other hand, it appears to have been their collective bargaining strength



that better enabled railway clerks to resist demands for large wage cuts (such as were imposed on Civil Service clerks). However, the larger issue as to the extent to which the rail unions were able to deflect market forces cannot be resolved here.

## Chapter 3

### PARLIAMENTARY AND ELECTORAL ACTIVITIES

#### Introduction: The Significance of Parliamentary Representation.

The wider context for the issues dealt with in this chapter is the relationship between the trade unions and the other elements of the Labour movement. The Labour party adopted a new constitution in 1918 which incorporated a commitment to public ownership of the means of production; an overly socialist objective that does <sup>not</sup> accord easily with the political orientations represented by the main stream of British trade unions. Ross McKibbin has explained the the adoption of Clause IV in terms of a concession to the Labour Party's left-wing intellectuals by its trade union elements, made in the course of the latter's ensuring their continued dominance(1). This chapter considers the especial significance of Parliamentary representation for the Association, but also provides some material relevant to considerations raised by McKibbin in that it describes certain careers in trade union leaders that ended with service in the House of Commons.

To some extent, the Association's MPs may represent the continuation of a concept of Parliamentary <sup>office</sup> as a quasi-honorific retirement appropriate to veteran trade union leaders of the Lib-Lab generation active before the first World War. This in itself is too limited an interpretation, given the Association's initial and particular reasons for seeking Parliamentary representation. However, although this chapter includes details of the outlook of the Association's MPs, there are indications that they had much in common with the old 'Lib-Labs(2). The Association considered Parliamentary activity an important aspect of its

work. To illustrate this: in 1910, when the membership was not yet 9,500 and the total funds less than £3,500(3), the Annual Conference voted that the General Secretary, A. G. Walkden, should become a Parliamentary candidate. (4) By 1913, he was actively nursing the Wolverhampton West constituency, and a four-page journal called the *Wolverhampton Worker*(5) was periodically available. All this was paid for from RCA funds - presumably from the political levy. In March 1914 it was reported that £600 had been spent over the past two years in the constituency(6).

The legal background to the outlay of money by trade unions needs to be outlined. In 1909, a member of the ASRS called W. V. Osborne obtained a legal ruling which prevented his union using its funds for political purposes. The following year, injunctions under this ruling were used to stop other unions using their funds in the same way(7). The Labour members in the House of Commons complained to their Liberal associates and asked them to restore trade union's pre-1909 financial freedom. The Liberal majority did not want this, and offered compromises. In the 1911 budget, they made provision for M. P. s to be paid for the first time(8). This reduced pressure on trade union funds, because Labour M. P. s had formerly been paid by their sponsoring trade union or by the Labour Party. The 1913 Trades Union Act was the compromise. This was finally accepted by the Labour Party; its main provision was that trade unions had to set up a separate fund for political purposes. The part of members' contributions that went towards it became known as the political levy. Members could 'contract-out' from it, if they wished(9).

The Association wasted no time. Later that year it organised a ballot to decide whether the Association should have a political fund. The result was announced in October; 15,496 voted for the fund and 1,340 voted against it(10). At the end of 1913 the Association had 25,000 members, so about 70% of the membership took part in the ballot. The

political levy was fixed at 6d. per annum(11), which meant it could raise a maximum of £625 in a year for political purposes. Only 800, being 3 per cent of the membership, contracted-out from paying the levy(12).

The Association's expensive political activity just prior to the first World War was not undertaken purely for the prestige of having a General Secretary who was also an M.P.; Parliamentary activity was seen as a legitimate means of pursuing industrial objectives and one likely to have been well attuned to the general attitudes of a body of clerical workers. Parliamentary intervention can be traced back to 1906, when pressure was needed to ensure that the membership would be included in the Workmen's Compensation Act for death and disablement compensation after accidents. This is recognisable as pressure group activity of a conventional kind, but a more unusual form of Parliamentary activity was described in the Executive Committee minutes as 'the blocking of parliamentary bills'.

'Blocking' a bill, or introducing blocking motions against one, means applying parliamentary procedure to unconventional ends(13). It was a potent weapon to use in connection with railway legislation, because the railway companies often needed 'private legislation' - so called to distinguish it from 'public' legislation normally promoted by the government and dealing with the general conduct of public affairs. Private legislation is customarily promoted by bodies such as local authorities or industries, to legitimate activities that they wish to pursue in the ordinary course of their work but which would normally be unlawful.

In 1909, the North Eastern Railway Bill was successfully blocked(14). In 1913, blocking motions were introduced against the Railway (No. 2) Bill to stop the intimidation of a clerk on the Midland

Railway and these also succeeded (15). The M. P. who introduced them was G. J. Wardle, who was sponsored by the ASRS (16).

Prior to the Association's obtaining recognition, such activity was one of the few pressures which it could exert on the railway companies but, long after recognition, the Association's M. Ps were still blocking railway companies' bills to remedy members' grievances. In 1929, the tactic was used to try and help the members who were still discriminated against because they had taken part in the 1926 General Strike (17). However, even in 1913, before more orthodox forms of negotiation were available, blocking was not seen as a universal remedy. Some branches wanted it to be used in salary negotiations but the General Secretary did not think this appropriate (18). Parliamentary activity was not only particularly feasible for a railway union, but had especial attraction for one with a non-striking image: 'defence not defiance'. It was constitutional and did not disrupt the ordinary routine of work and service to the public. Nevertheless, it was unorthodox; the General Secretary clearly saw a need for it to be used with discretion. But its importance was undeniable, and related to the importance of private legislation for the railways.

#### The Railway Companies and Private Legislation

Railway companies needed to promote private legislation when they were first constructed because land lying on the surveyed routes of the railway had to be purchased compulsorily; this was not as innovative as it may seem, for the canal companies had used similar procedures (19). When their network was completed, the railway companies still had to acquire land for new works and extending old ones, and sometimes needed to promote legislation for other purposes. They had

originally provided pensions for some of their employees in this way, so when they wanted to modify their pension arrangements, further legislation was needed (20). Nowadays, a fund can be more easily established, but in the early part of the nineteenth century private legislation was needed to accomplish a surprising range of enterprises. (Until 1857, it was the only way to obtain a divorce. (21))

So there are various reasons why the railway companies promoted private legislation over the years, but the main ones were to do with the acquisition of land and the erection of works and buildings on it. The following examples are from legislation proposed during the Parliamentary session of 1923. The GWR wanted to create a mile of railway line in Cornwall and to acquire land partly to build houses for employees; the London Electric Railway wanted to construct some new underground lines; the North Eastern Railway wanted to lay out some lines in the neighbourhood of Goole. All these Bills were principally to extend the railways, but the GWR's bill also sought to extend its police's power to search and arrest (22).

Unconventional parliamentary procedure can be used against private legislation because it is not normally supported by the Government of the day, relying on its majority in the House of Commons. Private legislation's passage through the stages known as readings is normally expected to be no more than a formality because it is non-controversial. But if no more than one M.P. signals his dissent at the 'second reading' stage, the Bill becomes opposed and must be debated. At the present time (1992) this is only a hindrance, because private bills that are not enacted can be reintroduced in another session, (23) but it appears that although this was also possible in the 1920s, the volume of private legislation was such that it was less practicable. This decrease in private legislation has not gone unnoticed; as was written in 1958:

" ...it may be said that Private Bill Legislation is definitely on the down grade. The heyday of Private Bill Legislation was in the period of the great railway activities round about 1840. At that time Private Acts were not only very numerous but also very voluminous. Some six or seven hundred such Acts were passed through the House in a single session, many of them containing several hundred clauses. At the present time about fifty such Acts are passed in a session, and their size is very much diminished.

The reasons for this are many and varied, but the chief ones may be briefly mentioned:

In our restricted country most of the railways are now built, the canals made, and the land enclosed, and, though new discoveries such as electricity lead to fresh activity, the majority of our recent inventions, e.g. the aeroplane and wireless, having little territorial basis, have less need for private legislation. The most important cause of the decline in Private Bill Legislation is, however, the passing of general Acts removing the need for much special legislation, and enabling that which is still required to be much less voluminous. "(24)

In 1920, 135 private bills were introduced; there had been 263 in 1900. The decline in economic activity meant that only 84 were introduced in the Parliamentary session of 1924-25, but there were 129 in 1929-30. (25) In comparison, only 28 private bills were introduced in the 1990-1991 session(26).

The railway companies would only initiate legislation when they had a real need for it, and hindrances to its easy passage could be more damaging than simply adding to its procedural tedium and expense: they could hold up a company's development.

#### Acquiring Help to exert Parliamentary Pressure

The foregoing demonstrates the potential of parliamentary activity. A union seeking to use it, however, needs a Member of Parliament who will support the union's interests and act as the necessary agent in using the parliamentary weapon. A member of the Association supported by it was first elected to Parliament during the General Election of 1923(27). Before then, the Association had to rely on a friendly Labour M.P. to look after its Parliamentary interests. The first of these was G.J.

Wardle, elected for Stockport at the General Election of 1906. He was an ASRS-sponsored M.P.; he had been the editor of the *Railway Review*, the journal of the ASRS, (later the NUR). He had been a railway clerk, so he is likely to have been a sympathetic colleague for the RCA's officers and Executive Committee(28). He did the actual blocking of the NER's bill in 1909. In September, 1918, the NUR refused to support his candidature in the forthcoming election, because his political sympathies were considered equivocal. The Association's Executive Committee decided to be responsible for his candidature subject to his continued support by the Stockport Labour Party and endorsement by the National Labour Party. He was lent £500 for his election expenses (29). But he stood without Labour support, so the Association had to stop retaining his services (30). He did not receive the 'coupon' but he did express support for the coalition(31); he had been Parliamentary Secretary at the Board of Trade, before the election. He kept this job after it, but later became Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Labour (32). After the end of his formal retention by the Association he continued to be very helpful during the negotiations for recognition(33). No RCA-sponsored M.Ps were elected at the 1918 election, so the RCA had to find another Labour M.P. to look after their parliamentary affairs. He was William Graham, the Labour member for Edinburgh (Central) (34). He represented this constituency from 1918 to 1931, when, like many other Labour M.P.s, he lost his seat. (35) He died in 1932. The RCA's first MP was elected at the general election of December, 1923. He was H.G. Romeril, a former President of the RCA, who had been an employee at the Railway Clearing House since 1896, and represented South-East St. Pancras (36). Even though he held his seat for only a few months, losing it at the General Election in October 1924, his presence must have been useful because William Graham's appointment as Financial Secretary to the Treasury from



23 January 1924 to 3 November 1924 would have inhibited his scope for representing the RCA's interests.

The RCA did not have to wait long before they had another sponsored MP. A.E. Townend, who later in the decade was to become the Association's treasurer, was elected at a by-election in September 1925, as member for Stockport (37). He was to hold his seat until 1931. A by-election in July put another RCA member into the House of Commons: A.W. Longbottom, who was elected for Halifax. Like William Graham and A.E. Townend he lost his seat in 1931.

As will be noted in the discussion of dissent in Chapter 6, the outcome of the 1929 General Election must have exceeded the Association's wildest expectations: eight RCA members were elected. The RCA's President, T.H. Gill, was elected for Blackburn; the General Secretary, A.G. Walkden, for Bristol (South); the Chief Assistant Secretary, G. Lathan, for Sheffield (Park); an E.C. member F.C. Watkins for Hackney (Central); G. Mathers for Edinburgh West. A.E. Townend and A.W. Longbottom both held their seats and H.G. Romeril regained his seat at South-East St. Pancras. It was providential that so many members of the RCA had been elected, because W. Graham was given a ministerial appointment - President of the Board of Trade - in the new administration.

All the Association's members lost their seats at the 1931 General Election, when only 52 Labour candidates were elected. Between 1931 and 1935 the Association had no formal representation in the House of Commons; it was not alone in this position. The sudden change from 282 Labour Members to 52 left a number of trade unions and other organisations in similar circumstances; and things were not to improve. The following year (1933), the Independent Labour Party (ILP) was disaffiliated from the Labour Party, which meant that the Parliamentary

Labour Party lost five more Members.

The Association's Executive realised they had a problem and in a report on the effects of the 1931 election explained how they meant to cope:

The Executive Committee will doubtless also pay due regard to the desirability of giving early consideration to the steps to be taken to repair the parliamentary weakness, and in the meantime to secure if possible from amongst the present Labour Members the assistance of those who will be prepared to take such action as may be necessary on questions which affect the interests of our members (38)

The Association's problems may have been less than was originally envisaged. Most commentators agree that the Parliamentary Labour Party between 1931 and 1935 was held together by the General Council of the TUC, and AG Walkden was one of its senior members for the whole period (39). At the General Election of 1935, six RCA members were elected, and from then until 1983 there were always Members of Parliament sponsored by the Association.

The Association's campaign to provide parliamentary  
constituencies for its members.

From 1907, the Association consistently sought to ensure that its interests in Parliament were not neglected. For obvious reasons, they were always thought to be best protected by sponsoring RCA members' candidature as MPs.

These have been sponsored from 1924 to date, intermittently at first and continuously from 1935, but not without a good deal of hard work and the outlay of considerable funds. The effort began in 1910, when the Annual Conference decided that a Parliamentary constituency should be found for the General Secretary and that it should be nursed with

Association funds. In 1918, a similar decision was made in favour of the Chief Assistant Secretary (40).

The effort to implement the 1910 decision was under way by 1913, when West Wolverhampton was being nursed intensively for the General Secretary. The intention must have been to prepare the constituency for a general election expected by the end of 1915 (41). Because of the war, there was none until December, 1918.

During 1917, the Labour Party began persuading trade unions to sponsor more Parliamentary candidates; it was realised that the Representation of the People Bill, when passed, would increase the size of the possible Labour vote (42). The 1917 Annual Conference would not authorise a parliamentary panel (43). This may seem surprising considering how the Executive could normally persuade a conference to accept their point of view, but the later wartime conferences were outside their control; delegates refused to increase membership subscription in line with wartime inflation (44), and the 1917 conference was the only time the periodical resolution for the Association to merge with the NUR was passed (45). The explanation for the Executive's loss of control appears to be partly that the war had altered the mood of the population at large (46), but there were also changes in the Association's membership: many of the pre-war members were in the forces and the wartime membership included a large number of women. Despite the decision of 1917, the Executive Committee decided to sponsor more candidates in the election expected soon after the end of the war (47). At Executive Committee meetings during the rest of 1917 and 1918, members and senior staff suggested constituencies where they could stand for parliament (48). In the event, three Executive Committee members and three staff stood in December 1918. None was elected. (Details of the Association's electoral activities can be found at Appendix VI)

Some part of their election expenses was paid, but for this election it is not clear how much. For later elections, after a Parliamentary panel was more formally established, details of costs are much clearer. Part of the union subscription was the political levy and the major part of it would be the income of the Political Fund Sub-Committee, which continued to be appointed by the Executive Committee until the Annual Conference of 1923 when, after much effort and money had been expended on trying to get RCA members elected, there was nothing tangible to show. Appendix VI gives details of where the various RCA members stood for Parliament but, in summary, the story until the Annual Conference of 1923 was as follows. In a by-election in March 1922, and again in the General Election in November of the same year, AG Walkden stood for Wolverhampton West - the constituency he had favoured since 1913 - and was unsuccessful both times. Seven other RCA-supported members also stood for parliament in 1922, and none were successful; the Association spent nearly £7,000. Added to this, the Wolverhampton West by-election cost over £900. A total of less than £200 had been contributed locally in all these constituencies (49).

The ensuing attack on the Association's Parliamentary policy was not principally concerned with its existence. Most of the membership appeared to agree that there should be a Parliamentary policy, but were dissatisfied with its form and lack of success so far. A special committee of inquiry was appointed, consisting of three members of the Executive Committee and three people selected by the Annual Conference. It was to make a full review of the Association's method of 'placing' candidates, relationships with local Labour parties, and other related matters. This was all decided when a resolution (numbered 99) was passed in the teeth of the Executive Committee's opposition (50). The Executive Committee came well prepared for the debate, because they expected

opposition from an unusual quarter. A senior member of the head office staff, G. Ridley, the Line Secretary who dealt with the affairs of staff employed by the Southern Railway Company, wanted to become a Member of Parliament. It had been decided that only the General Secretary and the Chief Assistant Secretary should be sponsored candidates for Parliament (51). Ridley disputed this and took his case to the Annual Conference. Just before the Conference the senior Assistant Secretary, W. Stott, declared that he also would also challenge the ruling that limited sponsorship. (52)

Ridley succeeded in obtaining a committee of inquiry but he did not become an RCA-sponsored candidate at this stage. Later in the year, at the Executive Committee's July meeting, he apologised for his behaviour at the Annual Conference (53). He was still waiting for a sponsored constituency ten years later in 1933, when he was once more refused help to stand in Peterborough (54). For most Labour candidates, help from a trade union was practically a necessity. It has already been shown how much the RCA paid out in the 1922 election compared to what was raised locally. It might be argued that if a moderately wealthy union was sponsoring a candidate there would be little incentive for much money to be raised locally but this argument appears much less plausible in the light of the conditions of life for many Labour voters in the 1920s and 1930s. Although Ridley did not get a constituency in 1933 he did not have to wait much longer; in November 1936 he was elected for Clay Cross in Derbyshire. Then, as now, this was a diehard Labour stronghold, being one of the fifty-two constituencies which returned Labour members of parliament in 1931 (55). Ridley thanked the Executive for the opportunity he had been given and for the assistance of Mr. Morris from head office, who had been released from duty for the period of the campaign (56). W. Stott, who had supported Ridley in 1923, became the General Secretary of

the RCA in July 1936(57).

The Committee of Inquiry appointed in 1923 took a long time over their report and it eventually appeared in March 1924 (58). It caused a certain amount of disturbance to the work of the official Political Fund Sub-Committee (59). The task of the Committee of Inquiry was difficult because there was little objective criticism which could be levelled against the parliamentary work of the Association, except on one particular issue: the General Secretary's candidacy at Wolverhampton West, which will be dealt with at some length. But, first, the more straightforward issues should be considered.

It was a difficult time for the operation the Association was attempting. The inter-war period was the time when the Labour Party replaced the Liberal Party as the alternative party of Government. This was not a planned transformation; fortuitous circumstances favoured it. The first was the way in which Lloyd George became Prime Minister in 1916, not as the leader of one of the major parties but of a wartime coalition; it consisted of a portion of his own party, the Liberals, allied with a large Conservative element. The ensuing peacetime coalition's support was mainly Conservative; the Liberal Party became attenuated. This was the manner of its decline, but there were social changes which made it inevitable. Until the 1880s the electorate was largely middle class, and the underlying split which produced opposing parties was essentially that between business and landowning interests. As the franchise was widened this split became less fundamental, and it became possible for a more broadly based party dependent to a large extent on trade union support to become one of the major parties and for supporters of the older parties to combine. A political change such as this one meant that traditional political categories were dissolved, with consequent difficulties for the

Association's Political Fund Sub-Committee in assessing the political potential in the constituencies they considered. They dealt with their task rationally, sending questionnaires to branches in constituencies which had been 'offered' to the Association. These appear to have been detailed and complicated, because there were grumbles that adequate information had not been returned(60). Past electoral performances were studied and movements in voting patterns recorded. Finance was also considered.

Money does not appear to have been expended rashly, but it was realised that political power is not available for a pittance(61). The issue on which the Political Fund Sub-Committee was open to criticism was not one which had escaped their attention, nor was it likely to have escaped that of the Association's more alert membership, who probably fully recognised that they could do nothing about it and simply had to wait until it resolved itself.

It was the problem of the General Secretary's constituency (62). In extenuation, it must be said that this was the first constituency where the Association had 'placed' a candidate and it had not been subjected to the scrutiny that was applied to others. A.G. Walkden, by this time, was in a very strong position inside the Association, as an able General Secretary in post since 1906. He had guided the Association through a period during which its membership rose from 6,000 to nearly 90,000(63). He had helped to organise the Association's recognition and a salary agreement that, with hindsight, was clearly favourable.

If he was reluctant to conclude from his experience that he should wind up his efforts in Wolverhampton West, it would have taken much temerity on anybody else's part to encourage him to do so. His reluctance was understandable; his attempts to win the seat for Labour went back over more than ten years, during which he must have established

many links in the constituency. The strength of these and his awareness of all the resources that had been put into his support would have made it hard for him to decide to cut his losses. But there is much to suggest that the constituency was a bad choice. The Liberals had fought it on a number of occasions between 1885 and 1910, winning it only once, in 1906, when they 'swept the country'. Even then the Conservative candidate obtained 49.2 per cent of the vote(64). This point can be emphasised by a paragraph from the *Times House of Commons, 1935*(65).

Sir Robert Bird holds what may be described as a 'family' seat in West Wolverhampton. Except for a break in 1929, when it was lost to Labour, the division has been represented by father and son since 1910. Sir Robert Bird succeeded his father on his death in 1922.

The Special Committee of Inquiry's report of March 1924 had only one recommendation of any substance: that no new constituencies should be considered. Even this was modified in that, if there was a general election, the General Secretary could accept a new one should it be offered to him(66); a provision that the standstill was to last only until the Annual Conference could consider the report, in two months' time, limited its effect.

The report's apparent diffidence can be explained by the result of the 1923 General Election, held after the appointment of the Special Committee of Inquiry but before its report was issued. The election resulted in the formation of the first - minority - Labour Government; it was also the occasion for the election of Romeril as the first RCA-sponsored member of parliament. Walkden's further failure at Wolverhampton, at a time when enough Labour members were elected to form a government, appears to have at last convinced him that a mistake had been made; he chose a different constituency, Heywood and Radcliffe, for the next election. It had been won by Labour at a by-election in 1921,



having previously been held by a Coalition Liberal. It went Liberal again in 1922, and was retained by the same candidate in the General Elections of 1923 and 1924, although in the last of these he enjoyed Conservative support and described himself as a 'Constitutionalist' (67).

The altered atmosphere at the conference of 1924 compared with that of May 1923 was apparently enough to ensure a non-contentious reception for the report of the Special Committee of Inquiry. Had the Conference of 1924 taken place after the General Election of that year, instead of five months before it, the mood would have been less benign. The Labour Government lost this election and H.G. Romeril lost his seat; the Labour Government and a RCA-sponsored M.P. had lasted only for about eleven months. The RCA sponsored seven candidates in 1924 and helped the campaign of another RCA member. 'Sponsored' candidates were candidates who were on the RCA's Parliamentary panel, elected there by the annual conference. Their constituencies had to be approved by the Political Fund Sub-Committee, which was mainly concerned with the question of the constituency's 'winnability', which was naturally a prime concern of the candidate. 'Helped' candidates were RCA members who had persuaded constituency Labour parties to adopt them as the party's Labour candidates. Up to ninety per cent of a sponsored candidate's expenses were paid by the Association; in one case this amounted to £700. 'Helped' candidates were given smaller amounts towards their election expenses; they were fixed at a maximum of £50 in 1931, and the highest earlier amount that has been identified is £200 (68).

The Association did not have to wait until the next general election before there was an RCA-sponsored Member of Parliament; it was A.E. Townend, a member of the Executive Committee and later to become the Treasurer of the Association. Townend had been an indefatigable candidate before achieving victory in a by-election in Stockport in 1925.

He stood for Manchester (Blackley) in 1918 and 1922; since then, in 1923 and 1924, for the Stockport seat that he eventually won. Demonstrating that the tide appeared to have turned, a candidate who had simply been 'helped' - A.W. Longbottom - was elected for Halifax at a by-election in July 1928. He had strong local connections, having been elected to the borough council in 1912; he was its mayor in 1923(69).

When the General Election of 1929 arrived, eight RCA-sponsored candidates stood, together with nine RCA-helped candidates. This was many more than the Association had fielded previously, but the circumstances appeared extremely favourable. The Labour Party had won thirteen by-elections since 1924 and two of these, as we have seen, were won by RCA candidates(70). But despite the favourable omens, the Association had reason for caution. The best results that had been achieved at a general election so far had been one candidate elected out of eight fielded. Even though there had been two RCA members in the last Parliament the RCA could not have expected the results that were announced. Seven out of the eight sponsored candidates were elected as well as A.W. Longbottom, who was 'helped' (71). This was a magnificent outcome, but it was the reward of over fifteen years experience, eleven years hard work, and a considerable expenditure. This time, Walkden stood for South Bristol and was elected. It was a shrewd choice. The constituency originally approached the Association in 1919(72), but as Labour had never won this seat the Political Fund Sub-Committee did not consider it a sensible constituency in which to 'place' a candidate. Further consideration in 1929 led to a revised opinion. Walkden fought a Liberal who had held the seat since 1922, but his recent majorities had been less than two thousand(73).

The negotiations and circumstances surrounding Walkden's movements between his three constituencies have been discussed here at some length

because he was the first candidate that the Association 'placed', and also the most important. More information is available about his parliamentary career than about any other RCA member's and, although his case is atypical, an examination of it throws some light on Association's conduct of their Parliamentary affairs.

The outstanding election success of 1929 had its liabilities, referred to in the discussion of dissension in Chapter 6; its effect on the administration of the Association provoked internal criticism. Although the General Secretary and the Chief Assistant Secretary had both stood for Parliament before, experience before 1929 did not indicate that these two officials were likely to become Members of Parliament at the same time. The staffing changes that had to be made to compensate for their enforced absence involved giving increased responsibility to some moderately senior members of staff and paying them more(74).

After the Lord Mayor's show comes the dustcart, in this case the General Election of 1931, with disastrous effects on the Labour Party that have already been mentioned. It followed the Labour Prime Minister's response to the financial crisis of 1931. With some Cabinet colleagues, a few other Labour MPs, and most of the Liberals allied with the Conservatives, he formed a 'National Government'. A general election soon followed, and the National Government was confirmed with a large majority. The Labour Party was reduced to a rump of 52 members, none of whom was from the Association.

During the inquest on the election of 1931, the advisability of the General Secretary's and the Chief Assistant Secretary's both being Members of Parliament at the same time was raised, but nothing was decided(75). This was not surprising, because the high regard that inhibited criticism of Walkden extended also to Lathan. He had been a senior official of the Association for many years and his election as

Chairman of the National Labour Party for 1931-1932 paralleled Walkden's chairmanship of the TUC's General Council for 1932(76). But the issue would not go away; nobody had foreseen that the two chief officials of the Association would be simultaneously elected to Parliament, but now that it had happened, many members did not want to see it again. In February 1932 the Political Fund Sub-Committee, which had Lathan as its secretary, submitted a long report entitled, 'RCA Staff and Parliamentary Candidatures' (77). The burden of the paper's case was that the Association had conducted its affairs sensibly in most respects and especially, as far as its paid officials were concerned, in restricting sponsorship to its General Secretary and Chief Assistant Secretary. In the course of the argument, the duties of the chief officers of the Association were examined in some detail. This makes the document useful outside the bounds of this chapter; although its evidence was deployed in defence of a contentious case, scope for distortion was limited. The report recommended that the two following resolutions should be presented to the Annual Conference for endorsement by the Executive Committee:

(a) That in the case of the General Secretary and the Chief Assistant Secretary the present policy in regard to their parliamentary candidatures be continued.

(b) That the arrangements which have operated hitherto in regard to eligibility for selection for the RCA panel, and the placing of prospective candidates in constituencies be continued.

At the Executive Committee meeting which considered this report an attempt was made to ensure that the General Secretary and the Chief Assistant Secretary did not stand for Parliament at the same time. As the result of the vote was a tie, with twelve votes on each side, the President ruled that the recommendation was not carried, and the status quo remained(78).

Both Walkden and Lathan were elected at the next General Election,

in 1935; but this was only six months before they were both due to retire, in June 1936. Subsequent elections were covered by the decision of the Annual Conference of 1935 that either the General Secretary or the Chief Assistant Secretary could be eligible as a 'placed' Parliamentary candidate, but not both(79).

The Association fielded ten sponsored candidates and eighteen 'helped' candidates in 1935 (80). Six of the sponsored candidates were elected, but none of the others. It was possible to 'help' so many because support was now limited to a maximum grant of £50 each (79).

In February 1933 the Political Sub-Committee (82) had issued a report on the financial basis of the Association's political work(83). As well as describing how the grants were made to constituencies, Members of Parliament, local political parties and other local political bodies, the report shows how the grants had evolved from the ad hoc payments of the early 1920's to a carefully calculated scale, that balanced what was available from the political levy against the amounts needed by Labour constituencies with high rates of unemployment and little available funding for local political activity.

Although the Association's Parliamentary policy was developed principally for industrial reasons, its M.P.s' commitment to the Association did not monopolise their resources to the detriment of the development of their normal constituency business and parliamentary careers. However, appreciable amounts of their time were spent in safeguarding the Association's interests. In May 1924, only one member of the Association was an M.P.: H.G. Romeril, and on 26th May 1924 he devoted his maiden speech to ensuring that the LMS Superannuation Bill passed its second reading(84). There are other examples, but this Bill's direct relevance to the Association's interests indicates the trend, coincident with but not caused by the Association's policy of direct

Parliamentary representation, away from the 'blocking' tactics that had principally prompted it. This trend, and the wider implications of direct representation, are discussed at the end of this chapter, after a note on an aspect of the Association's political activity which it has so far neglected: its general Parliamentary impact. Members of Parliament who are sponsored by trade unions are likely to be disparaged as 'lobby fodder'. There is, however, an argument that a Parliamentary party has a need for only a comparative few high-fliers and a larger number who can be depended upon not to be a disturbance. Party leaders in the House of Commons are highly likely to agree with this analysis.

The records of the eleven Association members who were elected to Parliament between 1923 and November 1935 certainly present them more as foot-soldiers than as the officer-class of the Parliamentary Labour Party, as the following table shows:

Table 5

	Years in House of Commons	Parliamentary Posts held	Other Achievements
Anderson	24	a Whip for 2 years	
Mathers	18	PPS 2 years; Scottish Whip for 10 years; Sponsored a Bill; various hon Parl. posts	Privy Councillor Lord Commissioner of Church of Scotland 4 times; Knight of the Thistle
Walkden	12	various hon. Parl. posts	TUC Gen. Council 1921-1936 Chairman 1932 Spec. Industrial Committee 1925- -26
Watkins	12	PPS 3 years	
Lathan	9		President Nat. Fed. Prof. Wkrs 1921-1937; Chmn NEC of Labour Party; Nat. Treasurer of Labour Party 1936-1942.
Ridley	8	PPS. 2 years	Chairman NEC Labour Party.
Townend	6		
Simpson	4		
Romeril	3	Chairman of a Parliamentary Committee	
Longbottom	3	PPS. 2 years	
Gill	2		President of CWS; Knight.

Sources: Vols. III and IV of *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament*, edited by M. Stenton and S. Lees, Vol. III Brighton 1979, Vol. IV Brighton 1981.

The table comprises 101 years of service in the House of Commons,

although not all of those elected in 1935 served for the full ten years before the next General Election. The record of Parliamentary posts is unimpressive, even allowing for the shortness of Labour's periods in office between 1923 and the wartime coalition. That two of the M.P.s, Mathers and Walkden, were elevated to the House of Lords is evidence that they became acknowledged as senior politicians of proven ability who could make a substantial contribution to the presence that Labour necessarily had to maintain in the second chamber, but it is not sufficient to alter the impression of the members' low Parliamentary profile at Westminster.

The Association never stopped organising Irish railway clerks after 1921, even though they were now in two different countries. Northern Ireland was still part of Britain and the Association's interests there continued as before, but Eire became more and more a foreign country, as socially perceived as well as constitutionally. The grants that were given to the Association in Eire for political work may seem to have been nominal or token amounts, but, for a number of reasons, they appear to have been sufficient. In 1922, £25.10.0 was given to Mr J. T. O'Farrell, the Association's Irish Secretary, for his attempt to become a member of Dail Eireann(85). By 1933, Mr W. Davin, who had been elected a member of the Dail, was receiving an allowance of £50 per annum. It was explained that this was less than was paid to RCA members of the British Parliament, because Mr Davin had found it took one third of his time to be a member of the Dail; in the other two thirds he could continue to be a railway clerk(86). The Association does not appear to have spent much of its political levy in Northern Ireland. Involvement in local politics was, in practice, more difficult for trade unions in Northern Ireland than in Eire, and much British legislation applied to Northern Ireland, which was represented at Westminster as well as having its own assembly.



These two factors probably explain why the Association did not make even a token effort.

The general election of 1935 was to be the last one until 1945, after the war. The few changes in Parliamentary personnel were the product of by-elections. One of these, in November 1936 was at Clay Cross in Derbyshire, when Ridley was at last elected to parliament (87).

From the foregoing it is evident how much importance the Association set on its Parliamentary policy. For many years, it was not only one of the few ways in which it could influence the railway companies, but was also an important way of promoting the interests of its members. Parliamentary policy's greatest significance was in its earlier days, when it was pursued by retaining the services of a sympathetic Member of Parliament. By the time it became possible for the RCA to have its own members returned to Parliament, there were many other ways of influencing the railway companies, besides Parliamentary action. However, it was still important, because although the Association could now meet and bargain with railway managers, it sometimes needed some other pressure to persuade them to parley. At times, the railway managers wanted the Association's Parliamentary support, and this could be turned to the Association's advantage.

The scope for different forms of pressure expanded as the Association acquired more influence with the Labour Party. One source of this influence was the coincidence of some of the Association's Parliamentary activities with the interests of the Labour Party's Parliamentary managers.

A political party has no trouble finding candidates for 'possible' seats; if there is a real chance of becoming an M.P., people will jostle for it. If the seat is anything less than 'possible', candidates are

harder to find. Nowadays, there is an informal expectation that aspiring candidates will be helped to find a likely seat after fighting one or two unlikely ones. It may also have applied in the 1930s but, as we have seen, there was extra help for Association members who could persuade a constituency Labour party to adopt them as a candidate, even if their election was unlikely. The eighteen candidates who were 'helped' rather than sponsored in the General Election of 1935 stood in a variety of seats, some of which were extremely unlikely. One had a large majority and a future prime minister to face; two others faced majorities of 29,000 and 18,000(88). They ranged all over Britain: one in Scotland, three in Wales, three in the London area, one in Birmingham, one in Liverpool(89). Others were in such unpromising areas as Wiltshire, Cheshire, Devon, and Lincoln(90).

Although this scatter of candidates would have gratified the hearts of Labour Party bosses, it was unplanned. Whether or not the Association's active membership is or has been any more prone than that of other unions to seek public office, references to it crop up remarkably often in the life stories of such individual members whose names figure in this account. Examples are the station-master at Kingham, the E.C. member from Swindon, and A.W. Longbottom of Halifax, who are all mentioned in Chapter 5. Personal experience as a branch delegate at an Association annual conference in the 1970s suggests that the tradition continued at least until then; it was held in late May, as is usual, and the year had been a good one for the Labour Party. The chairman asked all who had become councillors at the recent local elections to stand up, and although those who rose were never counted, they appeared to represent a remarkable proportion of the delegates.

The Executive Committee's decision to institutionalise a standard system of helping candidates, irrespective of their chances of election,

as well as pursuing a policy of selective sponsorship, represents a response to the aspirations, if not to the direct pressure, of the wider membership. The relevant extract from the E.C. minutes says:

....it has been the practice to make special grants to members of the R.C.A. adopted as Parliamentary Candidates by Local Labour Organisations. The payment has been stabilised under the authority of a Minute of the Committee of the 12th July, 1931, at a maximum of £50(91). [Note that £50 represents about £750 at current value, 1991]

So, by 1935, the Association's Parliamentary activities had grown from acquiring the help of a friendly M.P. to maintain the interest of its members to becoming an adjunct to the Labour Party's electoral strategy.

## Chapter 4

### THE ASSOCIATION and the RAILWAY PENSION FUNDS

#### Introduction

As employment-related pension schemes are partly funded by employers who, in times of financial pressure, may attempt to make economies at the expense of the schemes, trades unions whose members have access to them have a clear interest in monitoring their management. A further reason for white-collar unions taking a special interest in pensions schemes has been that an employer's pension scheme helped to guarantee white-collar workers their superior status and distance them from manual industrial workers - a distance likely to be functional for their employers. This aspect of employers' pension schemes was especially evident before the first World War, but even when a new pension fund was being considered by the LPTB in the 1930s, the management at first refused to consider including ticket checkers because they were not defined as salaried staff.

During the 1890s, the railway companies' pension schemes' crisis became apparent, and it appears to have been a factor in the foundation of the Association. The Association never lost its interest in pensions funds and this chapter chronicles it up to the beginning of the second World War. The Association's attention to pensions was likely to have contributed to its success in keeping so many of its members during the inter-war period.

It may not immediately be obvious why a company should want to provide a pension scheme. There are at least two reasons: a pension

scheme provides an additional incentive for an employee to stay with the company until retirement age and it creates scope for sanctions against unsatisfactory employees at risk of dismissal. This is because, characteristically, only the employee remaining in the pension fund until retirement obtained the maximum benefit; if he left for any reason before pensionable age he was only eligible for reduced benefits. These provisions were similar for all railway pension funds, although there were differences of detail(1).

### The Early History of the Railway Pension Funds

The railway companies appear to have been modest pioneers in the establishment of pension funds (2) and for making membership of them a condition of employment for railway salaried staffs (i.e. clerks and supervisors) (3). The first fund was set up by the London and North Western Railway Company in March 1853, and other railway companies established them throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century (4).

In 1873, the Railway Clearing House established a fund(5), with rules framed so that employees of railway companies participating in the Railway Clearing System could be members. This meant that companies both in Great Britain and Ireland could use the fund's services for their employees, if they did not want to establish funds of their own.

In the event, most of the pre-1921 railway companies used the Railway Clearing House fund; only the fourteen larger companies had independent ones(6). There were also the London Traffic Combine's and the Association's own fund. All except the two last-mentioned were established by statute.

Normally, a pension fund's resources were invested with its parent

company, and guaranteed a return of four per cent. There were exceptions; the return on the Railway Clearing System's investments varied - it was three and a quarter per cent in 1910, but contributions from the railway companies who participated in the fund increased it to four per cent.

Five of the companies with independent schemes - London and South Western, the Lancashire and Yorkshire, the Great Eastern, the Great Central and South Eastern and Chatham neither contributed to their pension funds nor paid a return on the funds invested with them. Instead, they guaranteed that the benefits which the funds offered would be paid. All the railway funds(7) were established by private Acts of Parliament; this is how railway companies could guarantee their funds' benefits with their shareholders' money.

The members of the Association were compelled to pay a fortieth of their earnings to one or other of these funds(8). This was a significant drain on their income, especially for the lower-paid, younger clerks. But before the first World War, very few of them were paid enough to be liable for income tax, so it was insignificant for them (and in any event was not paid by deduction) and railway clerks were exempted from paying National Insurance contributions(9), consequently, contributions to pension funds would almost certainly be the only employment-related charges on their pay.

#### The Departmental Enquiry

Prior to 1908, deficiencies began to appear in the funds and the Executive of the Association wanted an inquiry into them, so they asked the G. J. Wardle, the M. P. whose services they retained, to press for one. At the time Wardle was a supporter of the Liberal Government which had

been formed in 1905

Thirteen years later, A. G. Walkden, the Association's General Secretary, described how Wardle obtained a Departmental Committee for the Association and contrived to be a member of it. In 1918, when the description appeared in the Executive minutes, Wardle was a member of the Coalition Government; the NUR were threatening to disown him and Walkden wanted the Association to support him. Here is the relevant extract:

"So far as the RCA is concerned, he secured for us in May, 1908, the Board of Trade Enquiry into Railway Superannuation Funds. This involved continuous diplomatic negotiations over a long period and pressure with Mr Lloyd George (then President of the Board of Trade) and his Parliamentary Secretary (Mr. Hudson Kearly, now Lord Devenport) with whom he had various interviews upon information and statistics Mr Wardle had submitted following the action he took in the matter soon after his election to Parliament in January, 1906.

There was a strong force of influential opposition against our demand for a Government enquiry and it was not until Mr Wardle had blocked a Railway Bill which went to debate that gave him the chance of speaking in the House upon the Railway Superannuation Funds in general that the Committee was agreed to by Mr. Hudson Kearly, and it was not actually set up till after Mr Winston Churchill succeeded Mr Lloyd George at the Board of Trade in 1908" (10).

The Committee heard evidence and examined documents between 1908 and 1910. Their report, the evidence they heard and the documents they examined were published as two Command papers - 5349 and 5484 - which are very useful sources for the state of the railway pension funds up to 1910. The Committee which signed the final report in August 1910 had only six members, including Wardle (11). Its conclusions are interesting, because the funds did not change very much over the next few years. Even after the Railways Act of 1921, when most of the many railway companies were grouped into four large ones, these pension funds still catered for most of the railway salaried staff.

One of the main recommendations of the committee dealt with an innovation which had contributed to the large deficits. It was concerned

with three methods of determining the size of a retirement pension; 'average salary', 'last seven years average salary' and 'money value'.

The first system had been generally used prior to 1896 (12). A pension resulting from it would be based on a percentage of an employee's average salary during his whole employment. The 'last seven years salary' system was similar, but the pension would be based on the employee's average salary over the last seven years of his employment. Clearly, anyone who had been promoted would get a larger pension under this scheme, and this would be so even for someone who had not achieved a higher grade than Class V but who (as would almost certainly be the case) was at the top of Class V scale on retirement. This was the system which was fairly generally introduced in 1896, making larger demands on the funds than did the earlier one. According to Walkden, (13) the newer system was adopted because the older clerks, who were close to retirement age, persuaded younger clerks to support them in their desire to have it. The Association preferred a 'money value' system, under which, in principle, the pension took the form of an annuity based on the accrued value of the contributions paid by the pensioner and by the employer on his behalf during his employment. Details of the precise formula recommended for calculating the pension are not recorded, but it was evidently such that the 'money value' system would provide a bigger pension than either of the other two for ordinary clerks retiring at the age of sixty-five, but a smaller one for retirements at earlier ages. The Association's preference derived from the judgement that both of the 'averaging' systems were 'inequitable to lower-grade men' (14). (In 1912, the Association introduced a 'money value' system for its own employees; the scheme's reorganisation is discussed later in this chapter).

The Departmental Committee favoured the original system. They said



"...the average salary system is the one best adapted to carry out, with financial soundness, the objects for which the Funds were established". The point here seems to be that the averaging systems reserved controls to the employers that would be relinquished if they adopted a 'money value' system. A 'money value' system isolates a member's own fund, with its contributions from himself and the company. The other systems had a common fund which had the effect of augmenting resources from capital derived from the membership of people who left the railway employment before retiring; these employees were bound to leave behind a portion of what had accrued in the fund for their eventual pension, if only the interest which had been earned on their contributions. But the more generous of the two 'averaging' systems was too expensive, so the 'average salary' one won out.

The remainder of the recommendations are pieces of advice on how to run pension funds sensibly and humanely. Guaranteeing funds was said to be no substitute for actuarial valuations, and the recommendations included the suggestions that committee-men should be elected by the staff, and that employees dismissed for fraud should be given something from the pension fund(15). There does not appear to have been much of a response from the railway companies, probably because they considered that what was necessary had already been done between 1903 and 1907, when the deficits had appeared.

After the innovations which were then attempted and the further consequential adjustments which were made, the main features of the railway pension funds were left unaltered for a number of years. This period of stagnation was extended by the first World War, when the pre-occupations of the railway managements excluded such considerations as reorganising pension funds.

The Association had endeavoured to secure the election of active

members to the management committees of the funds. This was not simply so that they could exert some influence on the way in which they were organised and also supply valuable information about them to the Association's Executive. Until the 1921 Railway Act became effective, these committees were the only places where elected representatives of the railway clerical work-force had a voice in management. By March 1913, the Association had representatives on most of the railway pension fund committees and had set up an Executive Sub-committee to monitor the funds and to organise an even higher level of representation (16).

The apparent complacency of the railway companies in regard to their pension funds did not last long after the War. In August and November 1919, the Association obtained improved salaries for its constituency (17); this upset the balance between contributions to the pension funds and the benefits they disbursed. Deficiencies in the funds began to get bigger.

In normal times, these deficiencies would have been a matter of some concern, but the Executive of the Association were informed, in March 1921, that the railway companies considered that the Government would reimburse them and had already made representations to the Ministry of Transport. This was because the new salary structure had been negotiated whilst the Government controlled the railway system (18).

This illustrates how the relationship between the Government and the railway companies had changed. In 1910, a Departmental Committee was prepared only to offer advice to the railway companies. In 1918, the Government appeared ready to nationalise them (19).

The First Hurdle: Persuading The Railway Companies to Set  
up New Pension Funds

The reorganisation of the railways in 1921 implied changes for their pension funds for which the Association had to prepare itself (20). Its responses to the railway companies' plans for pension funds appear to have been based on the assumption that employees recruited after 1923 by the new companies could not become members of the old (pre-grouping) pension funds; the funds had all been established by Acts of Parliament in which the people eligible for membership were specified as being employees of the particular companies sponsoring the funds (21).

There was one exception; the Railway Clearing System Fund was open to 'Salaried officers and clerks in service of.... Railway Clearing House Companies or Committees subscribing to the fund' (22).

However, the new amalgamated companies appear not to have enrolled their new entrants into this exceptional fund.

With the help of a consulting actuary the Association compiled a proposal for a Model National Superannuation Fund (23). The idea was that the Association would have a counter-proposal to offer when plans for new arrangements for pensions emerged from the new companies. The Association's assumption about the legal obstacles to new entrants joining the old pension funds was severely jolted in December 1922, when the Southern, the London and North Eastern, and the London Midland and Scottish groups put forward superannuation proposals to the Railways Amalgamation Tribunal. They sought empowerment to enrol new entrants into 'continuing' pension funds of the old constituent companies. The Tribunal did not support the Association's objections the idea. The Association did not let the matter rest, but took its objections to the Court of Appeal (24), which also rejected them (25). In early 1923 the

Southern Railway promoted a Parliamentary Bill so that they could acquire the Lynton and Barnstaple Railway. This Bill came before a Committee of the House of Lords on May 3 1923. The Association petitioned the Committee and succeeded in getting a paragraph inserted in the Bill which had the effect of virtually reversing the Railway Tribunal's decision as confirmed by the Court of Appeal(26). When the news of the Association's victory over the Southern Railway was announced at a meeting of the Executive, it seemed that the issue was settled, but a few weeks later the Association again had to intervene whilst a railway Bill was passing through Parliament.

This time it was an LMS Bill in the House of Commons; it was amended in line with the insertion in the Southern Railways' Bill(27). The issue really was settled now because the LNER also agreed on a similar paragraph for a bill they were promoting(28). The whole episode demonstrates the skilful manner in which the Association' parliamentary muscle was used in 1923.

#### The LMS Pension Fund

The apparent reason that the Association moved so speedily on the LMS bill was that the company were trying to recruit a medical practitioner in Derby into the Midland Superannuation Fund. He had worked part-time for the Midland Railway Company and also had a practice in town, but was now appointed to the railway's full-time staff(29).

The Association were worried that if the LMS were allowed to recruit this employee into the 'old' fund they would try to do the same with other new entrants, although this was a special case of someone who had been retained by the Midland Company for some years and for whom there

might have been exceptional justification for using the pension fund of the company with which he had been formerly associated. The Association had, in effect, won its case, but there is evidence that improved pension schemes would have been introduced even though the railway companies would have preferred to keep all the options in their hands. The climate of opinion had changed because there was now a more general provision of welfare benefits. The old age pensions as first introduced in 1908 may not have been significant, as they were small, non-contributory and restricted to the poorest of the over-70s; but after old age pensions became part of the National Insurance scheme in 1925, the railway companies' pensions began to lose some of their attraction as reasons for choosing a job on the railways. The effect may have been marginal, but it was something the companies had to take into account. (30).

Although the LMS group joined in the effort to retain the right to enrol employees into 'old' pension funds, it had already begun negotiations towards a new pension scheme; a draft outline scheme was presented to Association members in July 1922.

The Association pressed the LMS to accept their Model National Scheme, but the LMS directors rejected it on the grounds that it depended upon a rate of interest on its investments that was one per cent more than could be expected (31). The 'old' railway pension schemes invested their funds with the railway companies and most of them had a guaranteed return of four per cent (32). The National Model Superannuation Scheme had been approved by the Association's annual conference in May 1922 (33), and the Association, undeterred by the LMS's rejection, had spent the summer of 1922 pressing the railway companies and the Ministry of Transport to adopt it (34).

Only three of the new amalgamated companies asked the Railways Amalgamation Tribunal to allow them to recruit new entrants into the

pension funds of their constituent companies. The fourth company, the Great Western, were in the happy position - as far as they were concerned - of not needing to make such an application. Under the Railway Act of 1921, the Great Western Railway had been treated differently from the other amalgamations, into each of which two or more sizable companies had been dissolved and given a new identity(35). In the case of the Great Western, the old company of that name was the core company into which smaller companies were absorbed(36). This meant that, unlike the other amalgamations, the post-1921 Great Western retained a pension fund appropriate for new employees.

By June 1923, negotiations to produce new pension arrangements appeared to be proceeding satisfactorily for the LNER, the Southern and the LMS. All these companies were said to have made acceptable undertakings of their intention to close down the funds of their constituent companies and establish new ones. The amalgamations of 1921 had created conditions which obliged the new companies to review their arrangements, presenting the Association with the opening they needed, if reasonable pension funds were to be organised for their members. As this did not apply to the Great Western and the Railway Clearing System the Association recognised that negotiations about these two funds were better left alone until the other three new funds had been satisfactorily established (37).

The LMS superannuation scheme was drawn up by a sub-committee of the LMS Board(38), between June and December 1923. The Board wanted to standardize its pension arrangements: in 1923 the employees were catered for by six different pension funds. It looked to the sub-committee for an early solution to the problem of plural pension schemes, being worried that employee members of the committees for their 'old' London and North-Western and the Lancashire and Yorkshire pension funds were likely to be

instrumental in promoting a Parliamentary Bill for the Association's model scheme. With the support of the Labour Party, such a Bill was likely to be enacted, and the scheme forced on the company(39).

It may have been the sub-committee's fear of having a scheme forced upon them by their employees that led them to devise a most generous one of their own. It was submitted to an actuary, who advised on its feasibility in December 1923(40). Surprisingly, considering the generosity of the sub-committee's proposals, he calculated that the draft scheme would require provision for £342,724 less in actuarial reserves than would be needed for the continued operation of the six existing pension funds. If the figures are examined, it can be seen that the main decrease in required reserves was because existing LNWR, L & Y and, to a lesser extent, the Caledonian, had larger reserve figures than for the corresponding new proposals. This was partly because the LNWR had its own supplementary pension scheme, which it had extended to the L & Y and which had created a higher reserve figure(41). It is likely that the sub-committee's unspecified brief was that their scheme should be better than the one the Association appeared about to launch, but it would have to be actuarially sound. The sub-committee were well-placed to put forward a favourable scheme because it would be assessed in comparison to pension schemes with reserves which had been inflated because of adjustments made to deal with the effects of wartime and post-war inflation on their annuitants. By 1923, the cost of living was much reduced from the level it had reached in 1920 and a careful actuary could budget for lower reserves.

The sub-committee must have been relieved that the main basis of their scheme could be provided at a reasonable cost. There were further financial considerations, but the sub-committee proposed how they could be overcome(42). The scheme was approved by the Board of Directors on

21 December, and a Parliamentary Bill was prepared(43). By January 1924, negotiations about the coverage of the new LMS scheme were well advanced. It had been agreed that employees who were members of the company's 'old' pension funds could all enrol with the new fund. There still remained two problems: unappointed clerks were not allowed to enrol in the new fund; and pensions already being paid under the rules of the 'old' funds would not be affected by the introduction of the new one. The Association thought there were 2,000 unappointed clerks, 1,000 being supervisors. There had been a management decision in 1920 not to take them into a superannuation fund(44). The LMS management were separately considering the position of 7,426 salaried employees who had not had the opportunity of joining a pension fund(45). The LMS figures appear to include their unappointed clerks; it is not clear how accurate was the Association's estimate of them as a component of the total.

From July 1923 to May 1924 the plight of the whole group was deliberated upon by a management committee. Their lot was improved steadily over this period. At first, it was proposed that those with at least 20 years service should be given a very basic pension(46). In December, it was reported that the General Manager was dissatisfied with the proposed basic scale and wanted it to be improved; he decided to base a new scale on that of the new pension scheme(47). In May 1924 the employees who had been formerly excluded were admitted to the new scheme on modified terms(48). Conditions improved even more for the unappointed clerks, whose case was pressed by the Association and who were given better terms of admission to the new LMS pension fund in November 1924(49). This was after considerable pressure (50); it is not clear whether the final terms applied to all of the employees who were originally excluded.

When the Bill was passing through Parliament, the company faced much



opposition representing the interests of railway pensioners whose pensions were derived from the company's 'old' pension funds; it seemed to be feared that the new arrangements put at risk the capital that produced their pensions. This opposition was overcome with the help of the Association's Parliamentary representatives (51).

The Association supported the scheme enthusiastically as the best pension scheme that a railway company had so far promoted. The employee paid two and a half per cent of his salary and the company matched this sum, but also guaranteed to add any cash needed to maintain the fund's solvency. Retirement was at the age of sixty, when the employee would receive a pension based on one eightieth of his final year's salary for each year of his membership. There was a maximum of forty-eighths and a minimum pension of £120 a year. Added to this was a capital sum which consisted of one thirtieth of his final year's salary for each year of membership; the maximum capital sum was forty-five thirtieths of his final salary(52).

#### The Supplementary Funds

The pensioners of the 'old' pension funds held up the passage of the LMS's superannuation fund's Bill on the grounds that the capital of their pension funds was being incorporated into the new fund without any benefit accruing to them from the merger(53). Their pensions were fixed sums, the value of which had declined in real terms during and since the war(54).

It appears to have been the Association that had first taken the initiative when the railway pensioners' plight became difficult. In February 1919, the Executive asked the railway companies to join them in

a scheme to help these pensioners. The suggestion was that members should voluntarily pay 3d per week to a fund and that the companies should contribute an equal amount. The fund should then be used to help the railway pensioners(55). By February 1920, there were eight such supplementary funds. This did not include the Railway Clearing System. The Railway Clearing House had one for its own pensioners but the smaller railway companies which used the Railway Clearing System's fund had not yet been persuaded to set up supplementary funds. Some of the companies without them helped their pensioners with grants from their own reserves..

The LNWR (which after 1921, was to be one of the larger components of the LMS) had established a system to help pensioners who had retired since February 1919, quite separate from their supplementary fund(56). Less than five years later - in June 1924 - only one company, the South-Eastern and Chatham, was reported not to have a supplementary fund (57) but even so the company was said to give grants to its pensioners (58). The Association was concerned, because although every fund had set up some form of extra assistance, in some cases either the company had stopped contributing or some or all of the employees had stopped their contributions. If the company's contribution depended upon the size of the employees' contributions, then lack of support from employees could mean that the help for pensioners was doubly diminished(59).

In the Association's report of June 1923 the LMS supplementary fund was said to be fairly well maintained. In June 1924 the LMS calculated the extent of the help which had been given to their pensioners. Employees had contributed £18,000 and the company had added £30,000. The total had been distributed as reasonably as possible amongst the fund's pensioners(60).

Dwindling enthusiasm for the supplementary funds may have been

because inflation had been declining gradually from its highest point in 1920. Even so, the cost of living was not back to its pre-war level and pensions calculated in 1916 or earlier were still disadvantageous, which may be why pensioners' supporters in Parliament so strongly opposed the LMS superannuation Bill in 1923 and 1924 (61).

Despite the problem of the pensioners, and the fact that the unappointed clerks' position was not yet settled, the Association threw its weight behind the Bill and lodged a petition urging its passage (62). This appeared to have had some effect because in July the Bill was reported to be before the Unopposed Committee of the House of Commons (63), and it received the Royal Assent on 1 August 1924 (64).

The LMS fund was the first bridgehead, and had the Association's concentrated attention. Nevertheless, whilst it was being pursued, pressure was still maintained on the other three amalgamated companies to persuade them to produce an agreed pension scheme. The next to do so was the Southern Railway and an account of this is the next stage of this narrative. It is followed by several other shorter accounts of the fortunes of other pension funds, and ends with the long story of the setting-up of the LNER's pension fund. The LNER's story spans the whole period between the wars, from 1921 when the amalgamation process began until the Royal Assent was given to the LNER Superannuation Fund Act on 25 May 1939, on the eve of the second World War.

#### The Southern Railway's Pension Fund

The Southern Railway's first proposal, in December 1925, was for a revised pension fund solely for new entrants. This would mean that older employees would only be able to look forward to pensions based on pre-war terms. The Association said this was unsatisfactory, and that they would

oppose such a scheme(65). This opposition was decisive. In March 1926 it was reported that the Southern Railway Superannuation Bill had been withdrawn(66)

In June 1926 the Southern Railway sent to the Executive of the Association the draft of a new pension fund bill they now intended to promote. It applied to all the employees of the Southern Railway pension fund but the Association's representatives on the pension fund committee were not happy with it(67).

In August, when a scheme that was virtually the same, but with an easier scale of benefits, was offered by the company, the Association representatives asked the Association's Executive to press for even better terms(68). In December, the company's pension fund Bill was published without the most recently negotiated adjustments, so the Executive decided to consult the company's management(69). By the end of the month, the last remaining difficulty was the size of pensions for employees who broke down in health; the pension fund representatives left this to be negotiated by the Executive(70)

These were the last pre-Parliamentary negotiations and, in October 1927, the new pension fund was established and its provisional committee had its first meeting(71). It was a less generous fund than the LMS one, but in some ways the Executive preferred it.

Pensions were based partly on the employee's average salary over the last seven years(72). This meant that the minority of clerks who obtained promotion did not do as well as under the LMS fund's provisions, so the scheme was more in keeping with the Association's ideas of equity. Nevertheless, on all counts except the disproportionately generous benefits for the small number of 'high-flying' promotees the LMS scheme was recognised as exemplary, and from now on the Association dropped the idea of their National Model Scheme and pressed each company to have an

LMS-type fund.

In August 1935 the Southern Railway proposed an additional feature for their pension fund. This was that, if a pensioner died, his pension could remain in existence and be paid to his widow(73). The Association was surprised by this initiative, but submitted it to a line conference of Southern Railway representatives(74). Not surprisingly, the conference approved the scheme and it was introduced(75). A move such as this from the employer's side, when the railways were in a severe state of depression, may appear strange, but in the 1930s the Southern was probably the most prosperous of the four amalgamated companies, for reasons already made clear.

Four years later, the Association agreed to recommend an increase in contributions for membership of this fund(76). This does not appear to be connected with the introduction of the new benefit - other funds had considered such a benefit (77) and in all cases had adopted it(78). It was not that the new benefit was too expensive but that, as one result of the Depression, retirements were tending to be earlier than envisaged in the original actuarial calculations; the other funds were similarly affected, as will be explained later. It appears that, as experience of pension funds grew, there was a greater propensity to agree upon higher contributions(79).

#### The Railway Clearing House's Pension Fund

The Railway Clearing System's fund had been an especially important one because it was used by railway companies in Britain and Ireland which did not want to establish their own funds. After 1921, as the large amalgamated companies set up their own funds, they took away from the

Clearing System's fund employees of the smaller companies they incorporated, so that the Clearing System's fund became less important after amalgamation reduced its work(80).

Employees who had become members of the Railway Clearing System's pension fund before 1 July 1913 enjoyed the subscriptions and benefits which had been in effect before the Railway Clearing System Superannuation Fund Act of 1914. In the 1920's they were said to be members of the 'Old Fund'. Employees subject to the provisions of the 1914 Act were said to be members of the 'New Fund'. In December 1926, there was a surplus of £101,646 for the 'Old Fund' and a deficiency of £107,313 for the 'New Fund'. A two-man sub-committee of the Managing Committee of the Railway Clearing System pension fund had recommended that members of the 'New Fund' should have their contributions increased by half a per cent.

The Executive was disconcerted by this action, because one of the members of this small committee had been sponsored by the Association and he had not consulted the Executive. All the representatives on the fund's managing committee were asked to delay this increase in contributions as long as they could (81).

The Association was not opposed to increased contributions if they could be justified, but the Executive appears to have considered in this case that increasing contributions would simply have dealt with the immediate crisis and left underlying defects in the fund untouched. What they wanted was a complete reconstruction of the pension fund. The suggestion it should be thoroughly revised was passed to its managing committee in May 1927.

This committee considered the suggestion at several meetings(82), but eventually decided the issue was not within their competence and sent it to the Clearing Committee(83). This body consisted of representatives

from the railway companies; its function was to organise the Clearing House. The Association was exerting some pressure on the funds' managers partly because members were urging them to 'hurry the matter forward'. It is interesting that the Dublin Branch was particularly persistent, because it demonstrates that many Irish railway clerks still used the fund(84).

After a few months' deliberation, the Clearing Committee decided to ask the General Managers to set up a small committee to examine the fund (85). In January 1928 the actuaries reporting on it said that, even though they had reported that an increase in contributions was needed to restore it to financial stability, their report was not a 'certificate' as required by the rules of the fund(86).

Despite this intervention, in April 1928 the railway companies increased the employees' contributions to the fund from two-and-a-half per cent to three per cent. The Association protested at this unilateral move and the Railway Clearing System pension fund's Watch Committee endorsed the Association's protest (87). The fund's secretary replied that the increase in contributions could not be changed, but that the Clearing System did intend to reconstruct the fund(88).

Negotiations to this end took place, and by August 1928 A.G. Walkden was admitted to them(89). The General Managers agreed to ask their actuaries to compute the cost of giving the same benefits as the LMS fund, the Southern's fund or the GWR fund(90). It is likely that Walkden told the General Managers that a pre-war fund such as the GWR's would not be acceptable to his members; this was certainly his response later on when the LNER suggested it as a model. Calculations based on the other two exemplars became available in August 1930. A scheme matching that of the LMS would cost an extra £992,333; one like the Southern would mean £1,015,000 more. The Southern benefits entailed the higher estimate

because there were few highly paid officials in the Clearing System's fund and, as has been explained, the Southern's method of computing benefit favoured the lower grades.

The companies' representatives asked if increased contributions were possible. They cited the case of municipal undertakings where the rate was five per cent. Walkden said that there was no possibility of more than three per cent, this being the highest rate of contribution in operation on any railway(91). The reply of the railway companies, in November 1930, was that they could not pay for the fund's reconstruction on their own(92). The Committee of the Clearing System's pension fund confirmed that members could not afford contributions of more than three per cent(93). In 1930, the whole economy of the country was depressed; the railways were suffering from competition from road transport and salaries were being cut. It was almost inevitable that negotiations should fail in 1930.

Between 1935 and 1939, there was a further series of negotiations between the Association and the fund's management. There were a number of reasons for this renewed activity. The quinquennial actuarial examination was due(94); there was pressure from women clerks to join the pension fund; and in September 1937, the managers of the fund offered its members a similar scheme for the widows of pensioners as had been accepted by the members of the Southern Railways pension fund. (This type of scheme was now known as a joint annuity).

The results of the 1936 quinquennial valuation of the Clearing System's pension fund became available in May of that year. The 'Old' scheme now showed a surplus of £1,297,717; the 'New' scheme (the one modified by the 1914 Act) still had a deficit, but there had been some reduction since 1926(95). A meeting of contributors' committeemen and representatives of the General Managers was held on 23 July 1936. The



staff representatives said that they would agree to higher contributions if a satisfactory reorganised fund could be established.

The General Managers' representatives would make no concessions, but said that they would report on the meeting to their superiors(96). As will be seen in the case of the LNER pension fund, the principle of accepting higher contributions was decided at the 1936 Annual Conference(97). The Association's actuary had agreed with the LNER management that the benefits negotiated by the Association in the 1920s for the LMS and Southern Railway's pension funds were found to be more expensive in the 1930s, and higher contributions were necessary(98). The main reason was that the original schemes had envisaged retirement at 63, but the Depression meant that many more people were retiring at 60(99).

This change of policy appears to have had some effect on the General Managers but probably not as much as had been hoped. They accepted the case for reorganising the Clearing System's pension fund, but they said that it would have to wait until the LNER pension fund negotiations were completed(100); in the event this was not until the Bill to establish the LNER pension fund became law on 25th May 1939(101).

Before considering the attempted inclusion of women in the Clearing System fund, it may be useful to examine why they were not already covered. Prior to the first World War, the railway industry employed very few women. During that war many of the male clerks joined the forces and whilst they were away their work was done by women. Many were dismissed when the men came back, but some remained, and more were subsequently recruited. This is what happened in railway clerical employment generally, but there were special circumstances at the Railway Clearing House.

At the beginning of the first World War, there were about 3,000 clerks at the Clearing House. During the War, because much of the inter-

company accountancy was dispensed with and clerical labour was in short supply, the numbers fell to about 1,400. After the War, the Clearing House did not return to its pre-war system of accounting - one reason was that there were now only four companies(102) - so, by 1920, the number of employees had only risen to 1,618(103).

At the outbreak of the War, there were 196 women at the Clearing House. The wartime peak in September 1917 was 275, but by 1918 the number had sunk to 192. The percentages of women employed were approximately as follows: 1914 - 6.5%; 1917 - 19.5%; 1918 - 12% (104). No provision had been made for their inclusion in the Clearing System's pension fund. In December 1935, the women clerks at the Railway Clearing House asked the Association to help them to gain admittance to the fund, and they repeated their request in early 1937. The Association's Executive expected difficulties, because women's inclusion in the recently negotiated London Passenger Transport Board fund had met with opposition from some male worker members of the fund's committee (105).

The Executive's fears appear to have been well founded. The issue was still not settled in July 1939 although there was some hope that a Bill could be promoted in November to allow women employees to be members of the fund(106). The new LNER pension fund allowed for both men and women(107), and so may have accounted for optimism about the Clearing System's Fund; the General Managers had said that its reconstruction would depend on the fate of the LNER's fund.

The proposal for a 'Joint Annuity' as an addition to the Clearing House pension fund came from the management. This initiative may have been included to blunt or deflect the pressure from the fund's membership for it to be reorganised and improved on the lines of the reorganised pension funds of some of the main-line companies. The proposed 'Joint

Annunity' did not differ materially from that recently introduced for the Southern Railway, which was also a company initiative; the Association accepted it immediately and it was rapidly implemented. If it was meant to take something off the pressure for a reorganised pension fund and the inclusion of women, there is no evidence that it succeeded(108).

The reconstruction of the Clearing House System's pension fund was eventually achieved in 1941, at the same time as the new GWR scheme, discussed later in this chapter, became effective. The Railway Clearing System Act became law on 2 July 1941; the new GWR pension fund became effective on the same day. These two funds are very similar in concept, having the same contribution rates and the same basis for the payment of pensions. Women were included on the same terms as men, but, in line with State pensions, they retired at an earlier age(109).

#### The London Underground Railways' Fund

The underground railways of the London area were not included in the reorganisation of the main-line railways, which took place under the 1921 Railway Act. This may have been because many of London's buses, trams and underground were united under a common management before 1914 (110). The 1929 Labour Government decided to unify the whole of London's public transport system as a public corporation. The idea survived the fall of the Labour Government in 1931 and in 1933 the London Passenger Transport Board was set up to administer most of London's public transport (111).

The change in management of London's intra-urban transport would have been a highly satisfactory one for most of the Association's Executive; nationalisation of the railways was Labour Party policy during

this period and A.G. Walkden, the Association's General Secretary, was a long-standing proponent of it. But the change would not necessarily have led them to expect any change in managerial attitudes towards the Association. The Chairman, Lord Ashfield, and the Managing Director, Frank Pick, of the London Traffic Combine (or T.O.T.) had become Chairman and vice-Chairman of the new London Passenger Transport Board(112). However, in January 1934 the Association was pleased to discover that the new Board was not insisting on the same severe restrictions on trade union membership that the T.O.T. had imposed(113).

Despite this, there were still no proposals for a new pension fund, and in November 1934 new entrants were still being enrolled into the old T.O.T. fund (114). The Executive had to wait until July 1935 before a new LPTB scheme was available for the Association's actuary's scrutiny(115). The proposed pension fund was not strictly new. It was a modified version of one that T.O.T. had set up for both its bus and railway clerks and was not established by statute(116). A valuation of this fund had revealed a deficiency of £247,067 and the Association's actuaries considered that contributions should be increased from 3% per cent to 4% per cent(117).

The deficiency may have been caused because the pensions provided under this fund were calculated on a different basis from those of the other railway pension funds. This is how it was described: "the annual pension provided on retirement is 2 per cent of the aggregate amount upon which contributions have been made by the employee during the whole of his membership of the Fund. The minimum pension granted is £60 per annum" (118). A clerk who stayed in the lowest grade of clerk, Grade 5 all his working life from the age of eighteen to sixty-five - and many clerks did - would, on his retirement, receive a pension of £176.8.0. If he lived in retirement for six years, he would be paid more in pension than a

similar clerk who was paid a pension and lump sum from the LMS pension fund. Even more surprising, the pension here exemplified was barely £10 less than the average male pay in 1935/6(119). A conference of L.P.T.B. staff, held in May 1936, made four stipulations;

- (a) No increase in the contributions of existing staff.
- (b) The minimum pension was to be not less favourable than those provided under the LMS scheme.
- (c) Women, including women ticket clerks, should be admitted on the same terms as men.
- (d) The fund was to be guaranteed by the L.P.T.B. (120).

Because the fund was not established by statute, and so did not need an Act of Parliament to change it, the Association's negotiators could make use of Parliamentary procedures. They were unable to satisfy all the requirements that the staff specified, conceding increased contributions and ending up with a fund that was a modified version of that adopted for the Southern Railway. The Board said that they would not compulsorily retire male staff before the age of 65. There was some fear that this might happen because the LNER had been forcing employees to retire early, because of the depressed state of both the national economy and, in particular, of the railway industry(121).

Nothing was said about the L.P.T.B. guaranteeing the fund, because it was thought that the fund would be viable as long as earlier retirements were not introduced. The L.P.T.B.'s actuary estimated that the deficit would be reduced by £140,000. At this stage, in December 1936, the Board would only accept in principle the inclusion of women administrative staff, but would not actually admit them until economic conditions improved. Women ticket clerks were not even considered, because they were regarded as 'wages staff', i.e., not salaried(122). By April 1937 both these points had been resolved. None of the employees

represented by the Association were to be excluded from the fund and women were to be included in the fund on the same terms as men (123).

#### The Association's own Pension Fund

So a reasonably satisfactory pension fund had been pieced together for the LPTB, despite the absence of the most potent weapon in the armoury of the Association's negotiators; the use of Parliamentary procedures to curb an employer. Of course, awareness that this weapon could be deployed against any future legislation promoted by the L. P. T. B. might have inhibited it from insisting on conditions which the Association would have judged as too restrictive or harsh. Throughout the period during which the Association was constantly engaged in negotiations about one or another of the railway pension funds, the state of one particular pension fund - so far not mentioned - could not have been far from the negotiators' thoughts. This was the Association's staff's own pension fund, which was long overdue for reorganisation(124).

It had originally been established in July 1912. This was shortly after the Association had tried to persuade the Departmental Committee, appointed by the Board of Trade to examine railway superannuation funds, that the most appropriate method of assessing benefits was the 'money value' basis. The Departmental Committee was not persuaded nor were any managers of any railway pension fund, but the Association used the basis for its own fund(125).

The 'money value' system suffers from a number of disadvantages and these became more apparent over the years. In May 1922 the staff approached the Executive and asked for the fund to be improved because, unlike other systems, when an employee left the Association he left no

money in the fund, so the fund did not build up enough resources to deal with emergencies, such as breakdowns in health. The shortfall was cleared by adding an extra one per cent to the employee's contribution and the same amount to the Association's contribution. Another disadvantage arose because so many of the Association's staff had worked elsewhere - usually for a railway company - and so their membership of the pension fund was too short for them to amass a reasonable annuity. So, at the same time as the contributions were increased, an Auxiliary Fund was set up. Employees could increase their pension by paying into the Auxiliary Fund a contribution which, again, would be matched by the Association (126).

These arrangements lasted until 1933. By then the Association had negotiated with the railway companies so that their members could enjoy improved pension benefits. The Association's staff might well have reflected that they were negotiating better benefits than their own, but they were not the only people able to draw attention to the differences. The Association could have been seen as observing double standards, although they had introduced their own fund in the genuine belief that it was a model. The disadvantages that emerged over time meant that the scheme was a potential embarrassment when the Association was urging improved pension schemes on other employers; campaigns to improve the GWR and LNER pension funds were carried on intermittently throughout most of the period between the two World Wars. In July 1933 the Association's staff once more asked for change in their pension arrangements; they now sought a reorganisation on the lines of the LMS or the Southern pension funds. By this time, more disadvantages of their fund had appeared. It may seem strange that they took so long to be identified, but the fund covered a very small number of people and in these circumstances it may well take more time for anomalies to become evident than with a larger

fund(127).

Two major disadvantages were that a member of the fund was severely handicapped if he needed to retire through ill-health; and that, because there was no definite scale of pensions, the members could not obtain relief from income tax in respect of their contributions to the fund (128).

The Association asked their actuary to prepare a report on the feasibility of reorganisation based on the LMS scheme and a proposal for such a fund was drawn up. One element in it was that membership of the fund was to date from the beginning of a member's railway service. The improvements were introduced but were expensive; an initial liability of £22,717 was involved but the reorganisation allowed for increases in contributions. These varied from 2 per cent to 14 per cent and it was estimated that the liability would be liquidated in thirty years (129).

The disadvantages of the pension fund, surfacing over the years, were not the only reason that the Executive were agreeable to reforming it at this juncture. The Association was approaching a crisis in its history which, although not to be overcome by a revision of staff pensions, had a direct bearing on superannuation arrangements.

The crisis had arisen because some of the formative figures of the Association were due to retire. One of the features of the new fund was to be retirement of the permanent staff at sixty. A.G. Walkden, who had been General Secretary of the Association since 1906, G. Lathan, the Chief Assistant Secretary and another member of the secretarial staff, a Mr Brindley, all retired within a year or so of the establishment of the new fund. The Association's solicitor, who had held that position for many years, also retired about this time, in February 1937 (130). He was W.R. Southeard, who had been employed as the Association's full-time legal representative since 1918(131). He had started out as a railway



clerk, but later took legal qualifications and worked for a firm that the Association retained before 1918. Southeard's employer then gave up his business, and the Association created a full-time post for him. Over the years, the work had become more complicated and when he retired the services of four solicitors were retained: one in London at £300; one in Leeds at £75; one in Birmingham at £25; and one in Glasgow at £25(132).

The senior secretary who replaced Walkden as General Secretary in July 1936, Mr William Stott, himself retired in September, 1940. This illustrates the extent and nature of the Association's staffing crisis (133) at a time when major pension issues remained unsettled.

Throughout the whole period between the Wars, the Association negotiated with the remaining two large railway companies; the GWR and the LNER, in an attempt to obtain improved pension arrangements for their employees. In one case, the LNER, a satisfactory fund was arranged on the eve of the Second World War, but the GWR could not be persuaded to modify their pension arrangements until the war had actually started.

#### The Great Western Railway's Pension Fund

There were technical reasons why the GWR was able to maintain its attitude; these have been recounted already(134), but they need to be examined here also. Unlike the other three large companies created under the 1921 Railway Act, the GWR - a railway company that had been in existence before the Act - remained in being and subsidiary companies were amalgamated in it. The GWR had a pension fund before 1921, called the 'Great Western Railway Superannuation Scheme'. Because there had been no change in the company's name on amalgamation, entrants who joined it after the 1921 Act could be recruited into the existing pension fund. The Association, no doubt spurred on by its GWR members, attempted to

persuade the company to revise their pension fund.

Because the GWR's position was so strong it was some time before the Association had an opportunity to exert pressure on the company. In August, 1927, the GWR pension fund was found to have a deficiency of £2½ million. This may appear a surprisingly large amount, but this was a pre-1914 scheme and it has been explained above that these older schemes were sometimes based on defective actuarial calculations.

The Association's members were advised to resist an increase in their contributions to the fund(135). Their refusal to pay an extra one per cent on their pension fund contributions irritated the GWR management, who told Association representatives that they would defer the retirement of senior clerks, so that there would be a slowing down of promotion(136). The unpleasant tone of this encounter may appear unreasonable, but it was quite soon after the General Strike and the relationship between the railway companies and railway trade unions was still strained.

The incident led to statements by the staff members on the pension fund committee that a reconstruction was under consideration, but the GWR directors denied this, although the staff committee-men stood by their story(137). The following year(1928) a GWR line conference was called to try to put some pressure on the GWR management(138). But the GWR management remained firm, and in August 1930 they formally informed the Association that they had no intention of revising their pension fund (139).

No pressure was put on the GWR directors in the early 1930's, presumably because the general economic situation was so dire, but by April 1935 economic conditions had improved and a quinquennial examination of the pension fund was due, so the Executive decided to try again(140). A series of special meetings was arranged to press for a new

scheme. In October it was reported that a memorial was being prepared which would be sent to the GWR management(141). This was lodged with the General Manager in December 1935. It contained 9,000 signatures out of a possible 15,000(142).

A reply was received in February 1936 pointing out that the Railway Act of 1921 did not oblige the Company to establish a new consolidated pension fund. It admitted that the GWR clerical staff did not have as good a pension fund as did clerks on either the LMS or the Southern Railway, but said that non-clerical staff enjoyed better pensions and gratuities than on any other main-line railway company. It would be extremely expensive to make the changes that the Association suggested, so no useful purpose would be served by receiving a deputation. Although this response offered no clear opening for further negotiation it was decided that the General Secretary of the Association should have a meeting with the GWR pension fund committeemen to determine how they should next communicate with their General Manager(143).

Since April 1935, when this most recent attempt to improve the GWR pension fund had begun, there had been an important improvement in the Association's ability to help its members. In 1931, all the M.P.s sponsored by the Association had lost their seats(144). It then became difficult for the Association to organise Parliamentary pressure, but the General Election of November 1935 changed things: six members of the Association were elected to Parliament. This meant that after having no response to requests for an interview with the GWR General Manager, the Association could say in June 1936 that unless they were given one, they would have to take Parliamentary action(145).

Eventually, this proved effective; the Chairman of the GWR agreed to see the new General Secretary of the Association, William Stott, early in 1937(146). At the interview in February 1937, the managers insisted

that the company was not economically strong enough to construct a new consolidated fund. It was pointed out to them that they were in a stronger financial position than the other main-line railway companies; Stott also said that a higher rate of contributions would be considered. The General Manager of the GWR said that he would give the matter more thought. Meanwhile, he set up an actuarial investigation of the pension fund(147).

By now the Association had been pressing the GWR management to produce a revised consolidated fund for nearly twenty years, on and off; a dispiriting exercise. But, early in 1938, the GWR management offered an improvement to their pension fund arrangements.

To put this in context, some background information needs to be recapitulated. Between 1935 and 1939, the Association was vainly trying to persuade the Clearing House pension fund to include women clerks; also between December 1936, and April 1937, it persuaded the L.P.T.B. to include women in its new fund. Women's pensions must have been recognised as high in the Association's order of priorities in the late 1930's; the GWR management appear to have thought that the most effective way of relieving the pressure for a new pension fund would be to provide pension arrangements for women clerks without even being asked. In February 1938 they published details of a pension fund they were going to provide for their women clerks(148).

The Association's Executive found out what the company contemplated a week before a Special Conference which had been called to consider a new programme of salaries and conditions, so the Executive asked this conference for its views on the GWR's pension proposal. The conference 'deplored' it(149). This reaction was not surprising, for what the Association wanted was a revised, consolidated fund; what the women were offered was a fund with the benefits as offered by the 'C'

section of the GWR's men's pension fund - older employees of the company enjoyed better benefits than those provided by the 'C' section - but the contributions were to be higher than those demanded from men.

Contributions for women who were 23 or older, on joining the fund, were higher than called for in the LMS pension fund and the benefits were much worse(150). (It is likely that the GWR management could have argued that the contributions were actuarially sound, as at 1938). Whether or not the GWR management were surprised by the reaction to their scheme, they told the Association the following month - March 1938 - that they were not prepared to do anything more(151).

The Association's Executive waited about seven weeks before deciding that a defective scheme was better than no improvement at all. They met the Staff Assistant to the General Manager of the GWR; a provisional committee for the new women's pension fund was appointed, pending an elected committee(152).

More than two years after the Association's General Secretary's meeting with the General Manager of the GWR, the actuary's report on the pension fund of the GWR was still not completed. This was in July 1939 (153). Two months later it was reported that the GWR was still being pressed to reorganise its pension fund but it had not been possible to make proper contact with the Company's headquarters. A quotation from Bell's 'History of the British Railways during the 1939 to 1945 War' will explain the extent of the problem:

"The Great Western Railway decided to establish its emergency headquarters in the vicinity of Aldermaston Station(154), midway between Reading and Newbury. Beenham Grange, a short distance from the station, was purchased and occupied by the staff of the General Manager, Secretary and Solicitor on the outbreak of War. The Chief Accountant's staff was located first at Hyde End House, Brimstone and later at Wading Place, Aldermaston. The Chief Goods Manager took over Crookham House near Thatcham; the Chief Cashier was transferred to the GWR Staff Association institution at Reading; the Registration Office was moved to a house at Cholsey; and the staffs of the Chief Engineer and London Divisional

Engineer were accommodated in waiting rooms, offices and restaurant cars at Reading." (155).

The GWR's fund was reorganised early in the Second World War, at the same time as the Railway Clearing System's fund, in July, 1941. The new scheme incorporated the separate women's fund and the company's other smaller funds. It was not as satisfactory a fund as the LMS's but the Association could at last be satisfied that the two funds that had resisted reorganisation throughout the 1930's were now reconstructed (156).

#### The London and North Eastern Railway Pension Fund

The reorganisation of the LNER's fund had been completed on the eve of the Second World War, having been an issue ever since the Company's need to float a new fund had become apparent.

As has been related, it was one of the three companies which attempted, in December 1922, to obtain the right to enrol new entrants in their constituent companies' pension funds. The other two companies, the Southern and the LMS, had produced new pension funds by 1927; but the LNER had not established a new fund even though in May 1923 it had been considering closing the old funds and establishing a new consolidated fund(157).

The LNER's problem was that, like the other three conglomerate companies, it was designed to be economically viable, but as the years passed, it was revealed not to be so. It had been anticipated that part of the area of the North Eastern Railway company - Northumberland and

Durham - would be profitable and be able to support East Anglia - the other large segment included in the Company's area. In the event, the North-East's main industries, ship building and coal exports, were among the most depressed in the inter-war period. Some industry did move into Essex, but the effect of this was not enough to offset the reduction in railway traffic caused by the severe economic depression in North-East England(158).

An illustration of the company's straitened circumstances can be discerned from a comparison of dividends paid on ordinary stocks between 1923 and 1938.

TABLE 6 - PERCENTAGE DIVIDEND PAID IN EACH YEAR

	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
LMSord.	7	7	6	3	4½	3½	4½	2
LNERpref5		5	5	½	½	¼	3	-
LNERdef	2½	2½	1	-	-	-	-	-
GWRord	8	7½	7	3	7	5	7½	5½
SRpref	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
SRdef	3½	3½	3½	1¼	2	2	2½	1¼

Table 6(cont) Percentage Dividend

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
LMSord	¼	-	-	-	-	1¼	1½	-
LNERpref	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LNERdef	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
GWRord	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	½
SRpref	4	1	3	4	5	5	5	5
SRdef	-	-	-	-	-	½	1½	-

(Based on the Railway Returns, 1923 - 1938 BL. Ref. 421/21)

Comparison of dividends declared on ordinary stocks would not be a valid method of assessing the economic viability of inter-war railway companies for any single year, but comparison of the records over a period of years is a reasonable indicator. A company may pay low dividends for various reasons, but artificially lowering them for a number of years would be ill-advised, because the supply of fresh capital would almost certainly dry up. Cutting the interest on deferred stock by more than half in 1925, subsequently ceasing to pay any interest at all, and at the same time reducing the interest and ceasing to pay anything on it after 1929 were almost certainly actions forced by economic circumstances. Another method of assessing the relative abilities to generate revenue is used in the table below. Unlike the comparison of interest rates, it has the merit of being a direct rather than indirect comparison(159).

TABLE 7 NET REVENUE DIVIDED BY GROSS REVENUE

	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930
LMS	.226	.215	.235	.129	.201	.198	.210	.176
LNER	.210	.180	.231	.087	.175	.184	.206	.187
GWR	.224	.205	.240	.149	.211	.199	.227	.203
SR	.236	.237	.253	.205	.230	.241	.247	.237

TABLE 7(cont.) NET REVENUE DIVIDED BY GROSS REVENUE

	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938
LMS	.179	.151	.164	.175	.188	.193	.189	.157
LNER	.175	.147	.158	.162	.162	.169	.179	.124
GWR	.182	.157	.170	.185	.183	.205	.211	.162
SR	.230	.219	.251	.251	.258	.257	.256	.162

Based on the Railway Returns, 1923-1938  
(B.L. Ref. 431/21)).

This table not only illustrates that the LNER's performance was worse than any other company's in every year except one - in 1930, it performed better than the LMS - but it also displays the effects of the



General Strike in 1926, the long mining lock-out which followed it, and the comparative economic strength of the Southern Railway, even in 1926. (There is evidence that the Southern Railway was much less affected by the General Strike and the mining lock-out than any other railway company) (160). The sharp drop in revenue in 1938, when the railway companies increased their rates and charges, is also well illustrated. It is against this economic background that the Association's struggles over the LNER's pension fund must be judged.

Like the other new amalgamated companies, the LNER had been reported in May 1923 to be considering closing the pension funds of its constituent companies and floating as new consolidated fund. The Association's manoeuvres had ensured that, from January 1, 1923, new entrants could not be enrolled into the pension funds of the constituted companies and the Association expected that the consequential need for some new arrangement would lead to a consolidated fund on the lines eventually worked out for the LMS and Southern railways. But, in October 1923, the LNER floated a new fund for new entrants only; all employees who had entered the company's service prior to 1923 would have to remain in the funds of the constituent companies (161). The Association learned in November 1923 that the LNER was promoting a pension fund bill in the forthcoming session of Parliament (162).

In January 1924, the General Secretary of the Association had an interview with the General Manager of the LNER, R.L. Wedgwood, who said that the company was proposing a scheme on the lines of the GWR pension scheme. Walkden said that it was not likely to be acceptable to his members (163).

Subsequently, the Executive of the Association unanimously empowered Walkden to oppose the LNER pension fund bill and any other railway bills, to protect or further the interests of the members of the

Association (164). By March 1924, the LNER's bill had been successfully blocked. The company said they could not afford a fund based on the LMS pension fund, but would meet the management committees of their constituent funds (165). The meeting was held on 30 April, but all that the LNER would offer was the scheme for new entrants, without provision for the transfer of members of the company's existing funds. Meanwhile, new entrants were enrolled into a provisional scheme. There was a nominal 3 per cent deduction from each employee's salary. No details are given of benefits, but they would probably have been as offered in the scheme the LNER attempted to force through Parliament (166).

The Association spent the rest of 1924 pressing the LNER to produce a revised fund. In June, the company again said they were thinking of a scheme on the lines of the GWR's. The Association asked for details of the scheme in writing (167) and organised a committee of employee members of the company's constituent funds. This committee added to the pressure on the company; a meeting was arranged for it on 14 November 1924 and Walkden arranged to meet the LNER management (168). At this meeting, Walkden said that when the 1921 Railway Act had been passing through Parliament, new pension funds were promised for all railway staff. He thought there should be a settlement by the end of the year (1924) and he arranged for the Association's actuary to discuss the LNER's latest scheme with officers of the Company (169).

Over the winter of 1924 - 1925, the LNER management flirted with the idea of an LMS-type fund. The initial appraisal made by the LNER staff was that it would cost £4,000,000 to change to a consolidated fund of that kind. The Association's actuary examined their figures. At his first attempt he managed to reduce this estimate to £3,500,000 but thought £3,000,000 was possible; he wanted to continue working on this problem (170).

In April 1925, the LNER management offered a compromise; a pension based on the LMS's fund's rate, lump sums on a graduated scale and contributions as those of the LNER fund (in 1912 these varied between 2% to 5% according to age(171)). The Association's Executive decided to call a line conference (172) to consider the proposals, but the issue became redundant. In May, the company informed the Association that as a consequence of the 'Churchill budget' and the Widows and Orphans and Old Age Contributory Pensions Bill, they had decided to defer a decision on their pension proposals (173).

Old age pensions were first introduced under an Act of 1908; at the age of 70 a citizen of the United Kingdom earning less than £21 .0 .0 a year was entitled to a weekly pension of 5s.0d. The pension was financed out of general taxation; it was non-contributory. The pensions proposed under the Bill of 1925 were to be contributory; the reason for the budgetary provision for them in 1925 was that they could not be self-financing from the outset(174). The idea of a new State pension based on compulsory contributions had implications that called for examination both by employed and employers in undertakings that already had their own schemes; using 'the good offices of our esteemed friend Mr. G.J. Wardle MP' the Association had negotiated railway clerks' exemption from the provisions of the contributory provisions of the National Insurance Act of 1911, on the grounds that they enjoyed more favourable benefits(175).

The Association's Executive set up a sub-committee on the Pensions Bill, to assess its effect on members(176). In May 1925, Walkden led a deputation of the LNER's pension funds' committee-men in an interview with their management, who repeated that the proposed legislation made further progress on the proposed fund impossible(177). This extreme view was debatable, but the Association hardly dispute that it was a bad time to negotiate an occupational pension scheme and that a

temporary standstill was reasonable. In the event, the Association continued to negotiate, probably hoping for early clarification of the effect of the Government's scheme on the LNER management's thinking(178).

The LNER management, however, had decided to revert to their original idea; it seems likely that the change of plan coincided with the new legislated proposals rather <sup>than</sup> was prompted by them. They now prepared a Bill for the next session of Parliament, which would establish a new pension scheme for new entrants only(179). This was in July 1925. The Executive of the Association learned of the company's intentions the following month. Not surprisingly, the Association's Executive were not pleased with the LNER management's behaviour and they began organising demonstrations in LNER centres. They also arranged a meeting of committee-men on the LNER pension fund committees for 13 September in order to organise a campaign against this Bill. The LNER management could not meet the Executive until November(180); their Bill was scheduled to be presented in Parliament in the autumn of 1925 and, despite the Association's summer initiatives, the LNER management seemed to believe, at least until September 1925, that the Association would support their Bill(181). The combined pension fund's committeemen met on 13 September and prepared a plan of campaign to be initiated if the LNER management would not withdraw their Bill(182). Walkden met Sir A. K. Butterworth of the LNER on 28 October; on being told that none of the existing pension funds was to be changed, he said that the Association would fight the bill(183). The Association's Executive were told that the LNER management's response was unsatisfactory and the campaign was to go ahead(184).

In November 1925 the LNER management, perhaps in anticipation of Parliamentary discussion, considered the difference between their proposed benefits and those provided under the LMS pension fund(185). At

the Executive meeting of 9 January 1926, the General Secretary was empowered to oppose various railway Bills, including the LNER pension fund Bill(186). In March, the LNER pension fund bill was defeated at its second reading(187). In June, the North British Agents Annual Meeting expressed pleasure that the LNER pension fund Bill had been rejected. They wanted an LMS-type fund and thought even sterner action might be necessary(188).

No action on reorganising the LNER pension funds is recorded for the next few months. The Association was very busy with the General Strike settlement and the passage of the Southern Railway pension fund Bill, which was passing through Parliament with the Association's assistance. It may also have been thought that the LNER management should have a respite after their rebuff. In April 1927, the company was reported to be investigating the cost of operating a Southern Railway type pension fund(189). The General Secretary met the Chief General Manager of the LNER on 2 November 1927, and was told that there were no plans for a re-organised fund(190). The Association made a further attempt to persuade the LNER to reorganise their pension fund when their annual accounts were published in February 1928(191). The company replied that their economic situation was worse and that they could not consider a new pension fund. The Association decided to continue to maintain their case with the company, but not to press it for the time being.

Some worrying confirmation that the LNER's economic position was deteriorating came to the Association's attention in November 1928. The LNER management were inducing older members of their staff to retire by offering them special lump sums. The Executive were worried that this would upset the stability of the company's pension funds, decided to press once more for new pension arrangements(192). Pressure was applied

on the company over the next months both by the Association's Executive and by the LNER pension funds' committee-men, but to no effect (193). The company further extended the policy which had so disturbed the Association in November 1928. In September 1930, they began to dismiss 63 year old employees, giving them pensions for which they would normally have had to wait until they were 65. Station masters were allowed to stay in their station houses until they could arrange other accommodation (194).

The LNER asked the Association to leave the reorganisation of their pension funds in abeyance, but did not need to press this point. The Association's Executive had already decided that, although regrettable, the company's behaviour was understandable in view of the economic climate and that pressure should be withheld for the time being (195).

The following month, the committee-men of the North British Superannuation fund had a meeting with the Association's General Secretary and its Scottish solicitor. The committeemen thought that, under the rules of their fund, a 63 year old could not be given the pension normally payable at the age of 65 (196). An aspect of the fund that may not have been considered by the LNER directors in London was that, before 1921, it catered for employees of a railway company in Scotland. Scottish law differs considerably from that which governs affairs in England and it may have been this aspect which upset the LNER's arrangements. The Scottish solicitor declared that it was not possible, under the rules of the North British fund, to pay the pension two years early (197). The compromise which the company organised was to pay compulsorily retired 63 year olds a pound a week until they were 65 and eligible for a normal pension. This arrangement entailed the company's maintaining contributions to the fund throughout the two-year

'mark-time' period(198).

It may well be that the policy of early retirement turned out not to have been as economical as was intended. This is, however, unlikely; other companies introduced similar policies. The Cheshire Counties Committee, which was jointly administered by the LMS and the LNER, made a further economy; their policy was for retirement at 62 without any mark-time payments. By 1932, reports of hardship caused by enforced retirements were reaching the Executive of the Association(199), but the companies did not desist. By 1933, most clerks working for the LNER were retiring at 60 and women clerks, who were not in any of their pension funds, were being dismissed at 55(200).

During the early 1930<sup>s</sup> the Association continued to press the company to reorganise its pension fund, especially when the annual accounts were published, but there could have been little real expectation of a concrete result (201).

In December 1934, the General Manager of the LNER told the Association that it might be now possible to reorganise their pension funds(202). Tables 6 & 7 above confirms that the company's finances did improve that year. The Association's actuary was asked to make a report on the LNER's proposals(203). In July 1935 the contributions to the LNER provisional pension fund were increased from three to four per cent (204), and this appeared to confirm that the LNER had decided to reorganise its pension funds.

The Association's hopes were dashed in December 1936, when it was discovered that the company intended only to modify the conditions for clerks in one section of the Great Northern fund. A line conference of LNER members was furious at this minimal outcome and wanted the next LNER Bill in Parliament to be blocked to call attention to its unsatisfactory pension funds. The Executive did not agree to do this, but decided to

raise the matter in Parliament by other means(205). This was possible because in November 1935 six Association members, including A.G. Walkden and G. Lathan, had been elected to the House of Commons.

Walkden met the Chief General Manager of the LNER in February 1936 and once again it seemed that the company were amenable to reorganising their pension funds although they were concerned about the expense. The Executive saw some satisfactory progress in this, but determined that unless there was further early development they would block the next LNER bill(206).

As it turned out, the company did not respond to further prodding, so the Executive placed a block on the LNER (Scottish Provisional Order) Bill(207). This elicited a response within a fortnight. It now seemed to be agreed that a consolidated fund based on the Southern Railway's was a likely outcome. The company still insisted that the fund had to be self-financing and they did not think that the Southern Railway's rates were enough to provide for benefits at the levels its fund offered. The Association's actuary agreed with this analysis. The stability of pension funds was increasingly affected by greater longevity and earlier retirement ages. Furthermore, labour turnover was not as frequent as it had been in more prosperous times. When workers left a job they left some money in the pension fund; if more people stayed in a job until retirement age then pension funds would have to pay out more in pensions but would have less money in the fund. It was decided to present the case for higher contributions to the next Annual Conference to ensure support for the Association's negotiators in their continued attempts to formulate a pension fund acceptable as realistic by the LNER's management. Meanwhile, the block on the LNER's bill would be continued(208). The Annual Conference of 1936 accepted the case for higher contributions, so the Association's negotiators had the



necessary backing for moving to the next stage of meetings(209).

○ The blocking of the LNER's Bill had been maintained because the company had introduced another economy measure to which the Association objected; they had failed to pay the appropriate higher salary when members of their staff were promoted. The company agreed to stop this practice and it was agreed to lift the block on the company's Bill(210).

Although representatives of the Association as a whole had accepted a policy of higher pension fund contributions, it was the Association's members who worked for the LNER who would have to pay them. In August 1936, there was a meeting of representatives from practically all the LNER pension funds. It limited the Association's negotiators to discussing contribution rates no higher than four and a half per cent and said that the final decision to accept or reject a consolidated fund should be made by the employees who would be affected. The delegates from the Great Central Fund did not attend the meeting. It was diplomatically reported that they were unable to do so, but the reason was that a number of members of the Great Central Fund were beginning to think that their current fund was a better bargain than what the likely outcome of a new consolidated fund(211). Disaffection continued to rumble as a background to the negotiations of the next few years. It was described as being confined to 'some clerks at Gorton', but this was the Great Central's main depot and engine-building works and so was more significant than the description suggests. The recalcitrants were still threatening legal action in December 1937, but by then it was apparent that they were in a minority and their action would be opposed by other LNER clerks(212).

Investigations to determine the outline of the new pension fund began in December 1936(213). The following month, compulsory retirements at 60 were suspended. In October 1937 the Association's Executive

expressed to the LNER's management their concern about the length of time being taken to organise a preliminary scheme(214). By January 1938 the Executive judged the delays to be unreasonable enough to justify blocking the LNER (General Powers) Bill(215). This blocking worked; the following month a meeting was arranged with the LNER directors and it was then revealed that the LNER pension funds had a combined deficiency of £14 million. It was agreed that this should be the responsibility of the company(216). More meetings were held during the summer of 1938 and in July it was announced that a Bill was to be promoted to establish a consolidated pension fund based on the Southern Railway's(217). The Bill was enacted on 25 May 1939 and came into operation on 1 July(218).

#### Summary and Implications

In 1941, the end of the story told in this chapter, Association members and staff contributed to seven pension funds. At the beginning, in 1919, there had been seventeen. All but two were established by statute. The seven revised and - where necessary - consolidated funds were: the LMS's, the Southern's, the Association's own, the London Transport Board's fund, the LNER's, the Great Western's and the Railway Clearing System's. This chapter has explained how the transformation came about. Given that between 1921 and 1923 over one hundred railway companies were amalgamated into four large ones, it might reasonably have been supposed that pension schemes would be reorganised as part of the general reconstruction. It has been demonstrated that this was far from the case. The Association had to work hard to achieve a satisfactory result. They did so and, in so far as getting the best possible bargain for their members was concerned, their work was within the traditional sphere of trade union activity. However, the circumstances of the time

meant that getting a good bargain entailed involving the union in managerial aspects of a major industrial reorganisation and, to this extent, working outside traditional expectations.

Despite this, the Association's work on pension funds was regarded favourably by the NUR - the railway union that was older, bigger, and the Association's rival in recruiting members. Although the Association recruited a majority of clerks and supervisory staff, a sizeable number joined the NUR; enough for the NUR to have a salaried grades committee. In September 1932, this committee had a policy on railway pension funds. Its policy was;

"...bringing into operation a standardised scheme of superannuation on all lines on a par with the scheme now in operation on the LMS; steps also to be taken to secure the entry of Supervisory Grades into the Superannuation Scheme" (219).

On 21 September 1932, the Association's negotiating sub-committee met the NUR's salaried grades committee. At the end of their discussions, the NUR committee decided to leave pension matters in the hands of the Association's negotiators, but asked to be informed periodically how the negotiations were proceeding (220).

An important aspect of the pensions story, as told here, is that it emphasises the constant day-to-day dealings between the Association and their members' employers. It is likely that, in any trade union, these dealings are the most important part of the union's work from the point of view of the ordinary member, but it is difficult to describe them in a manner that brings out their importance. Even when they are set in the context of the circumstances to which they relate and which set them in train, the description is always likely to be repetitious; humdrum persistence and attention to detail are central to the activity. The pensions story is one which could not be told without

an account of various to-ings and fro-ings that surrounded formal negotiations over a long time, and so it provides a focus for an aspect of trade union life that has an interest beyond the specific issue under discussion (221).

## Chapter 5

### The Association, the General Strike and its Aftermath

#### Introduction

The General Strike of 1926 was a severe blow to the integrity and strength of the Association. It spent 77 per cent of the total funds it had acquired up to the end of 1926(1) and lost 16,000 members from the number it had built up by the end of 1925(2). Any union might incur losses through a strike, but what needs to be explained is how one which had so far been, essentially, a non-striking union expended its resources so freely during a sympathetic strike(3.)

Popular expectations of postwar reconstruction were generally high. This was almost certainly true of working men, one third of whom had served in the forces knowing the horror of war at first hand, often seeing friends killed or horribly maimed(4). One well-known general history of the inter-war period sought to explain how these expectations were not satisfied(5); its writer observed:

'When the war ended in November 1918, there were few who did not hope that the losses and sufferings it had brought might be redeemed in a better world...The history of the twenty years between the two World Wars is the history of the disappointment of these hopes.'(6)

Amongst the 'few' were those who decided policy, certainly for the first ten years, and their collective aim was to return affairs generally to what had obtained before the war. The outstanding example of this is the return to the gold standard at its pre-war rate. This policy will be mentioned later because of its direct relevance to the General Strike;

the point here is that it harked back to pre-war days when London was the centre of a strong financial system based on gold(7). Since then, many of Britain's overseas markets had been lost, and changes in its domestic economy meant that there was no longer the sound economic base without which the return to pre-war conditions was doomed(8). It was as if some of the economic apparatus of pre-war Britain was restored in the hope that the rest would follow. Conflict between popular aspirations and the outcome of political decisions is one strand in the history of the next few years, underpinning the industrial militancy which was strongest just after the war and declined after the General Strike. In its way, the Association reflected this aspect of popular feeling.

The peculiarity of the Association from the end of the war until after the General Strike was that its Executive and senior officers were more ready to strike than most of its general membership. This propensity is demonstrated later in this chapter: relevant instances include the Executive's taking the initiative in promoting of a strike fund in 1921, and its energetic attempts to get the membership to support a proposed 'Triple Alliance strike, just prior to 'Black Friday' (9). The Executive's behaviour in this period may simply been due to their perception that postwar deflation, which began at the end of 1920, signalled a general attack on wages and the conditions for industrial action. The general membership became more militant from 1921 to 1926, although never as much as was the railways' manual workforce.

The near-strikes of 1919 were the first sign that the Association's previous non-strike policy was now compromised(10). A change would mean setting up a strike fund, and in March 1920 the Association's President suggested this should be done(11). So at a special conference held in Birmingham it was decided that the subscription should be doubled to one shilling per week(12). Since membership was then at the highest point it

was to reach in the inter-war period, this would have been a factor in the Executive's attitude: there were 87,054 members at the end of 1920(13). After the classification appeals were determined, there were 105,164 white-collar workers from whom the Association recruited members, (14) so it had managed to enrol 82.78% of its constituency. This was a remarkable achievement, but the high level was not maintained and it would be 1943, in the middle of another war, before it was reached again(15).

Membership dropped dramatically after 1920. At the end of 1921, it was 60,264; by 1922 it was 51,137(16). It is difficult fully to explain the decline, although the increased subscription appears to have been partly responsible. At the time, it was thought that the drop was caused by a number of factors, including reaction to immediate events after 1920 and dissatisfaction over classification. Also, the NUR was recruiting competitively, offering membership for a subscription of 5d per week in some districts(17). Whatever the reason for the drop, membership began to rise after January, 1923, when three grades of membership were offered at different rates, namely: one shilling, ninepence or sixpence. There were 66,130 members by the end of 1925. Membership had suffered a reverse, but as most members continued to pay the highest rate, subscription income was maintained(18). However, a significant proportion of the membership was not prepared to pay the higher subscription which was thought necessary to build up a fighting fund. Those who left the Association may not all have done so because of principled objections to its policy, but the possibility that many, perhaps most of them, did so simply because they were unwilling to spend more on their union does not conflict with the view that the membership loss was related to a lack of militancy.

The period from the end of the first World War to the General Strike

was one of unusual industrial activity for the Association. This was also true of other trade unions, subject to the same influences. The most immediate was the downward pressure exerted on wage-rates after 1920 which affected many industries to a greater or lesser extent. The other influences also arose from the war; its ending signalled the release of energy which had been partly kept in check by the industrial truce which had been agreed at the beginning of the war. Added to this was the heightened class-consciousness and near-revolutionary attitudes so evident in the early 1920's. Most general commentators discuss them at some length(19). The Association was affected by them, but hesitated at piecemeal, provocative behaviour. It refused to commit its membership to the 'Hands off Russia' two-day strike saying that, 'at present it was not Labour Party policy so it was not RCA policy' (20). It should be noted that the General Strike was TUC policy.

The General Strike was in principle sympathetic, in support of the coal-miners' grievances. Their industry had a serious problem; there were more pits and miners than the postwar economy required. Before the first World War, according to at least one commentator(21), there had been a large increase in the export of coal because competition from other countries had led to a drop in the export of manufactured goods and other exports were needed to keep trade balanced. By the 1920's other countries had discovered that they could successfully compete in the coal trade(22). Britain's prewar expansion of its coal industry had attracted labour to it, making it one of the largest employers. Wartime needs kept up the demands for coal and a large labour force. During the war, many of the easiest coal workings were exhausted, and the remainder included those that were more difficult and more expensive to mine(23). In 1920, during the immediate and short-lived post-war boom, 1,083,000 men were employed in coal extraction(24).



The inter-war period became progressively more difficult for the British coal industry. There was a drastic drop in exports; home consumption neither declined nor increased(25). But this lack of movement in domestic demand concealed industrial changes. The electrical industry and the iron and steel industry adopted more fuel-efficient processes, but there was also extensive substitution of other fuels for coal. Oil was largely substituted for coal for the propulsion of ships. The competition from other countries in the inter-war period was mainly from the USA, Germany and Poland(26).

The coal-owners' simplistic reaction to declining demand was to balance their accounts by cutting wage rates and so lowering their labour costs. Because wartime and immediate post-war inflation had ended by 1921, many workers were earning more - in real terms - than before the war. There was a general fear that improvements would not be sustained; the attempt to reduce miners' wages might well be the beginning of a general attack. For many workers, solidarity with the miners was not simply helping fellow-workers who were under threat; it was attempting to stop the employers' attack before it reached you.

The state of the economy and of industrial relations after 1920 presented the conditions under which the Association might favour industrial action or, at least, be unable to resist it. The Association's involvement in the General Strike ensued; its particular kind of collective common sense could not save it from what was to be a very uncomfortable time for its office and members. Once the strike was over, the common sense came back into play. The Association got the best deal in work-sharing as quickly as it could for the majority of its members, and then concentrated on fair treatment for the few who had been singled out for special treatment. Even though this meant interfering

with railway legislation and in some cases took years to accomplish, the Association got the best deal for the majority of them also.

### Postwar difficulties

At the time of the first World War, coal was by far the major source of fuel and the railways were the major mode of long-distance transport. Not surprisingly it was found necessary to take both these industries into government control during the war(27). This did not amount to full nationalisation, but even so, some of the advantages of nationalisation were demonstrated(28).

The TUC had declared an industrial truce during the war, after which many groups of workers prepared to make peacetime bargains with their employers. For workers in industries which had been controlled by the Government, one possible element in the bargaining was the likelihood of making government control permanent. Nationalisation was part of the miners' programme, formulated at a special conference in January 1919; they also wanted a six-hour day and a thirty per cent increase in total earnings(29). After an unsatisfactory response from the Government, a strike ballot resulted in a majority of practically six to one for a strike. If the miners struck, they were likely to call for support from the other members of their 'Triple Alliance': the NUR and the National Transport Workers Federation(30). This would mean a virtual general strike, a very unpleasant prospect after only a few months of peace. Lloyd George's response was to set up a Coal Industries Commission, usually referred to as the 'Coal Commission' or the 'Sankey Commission', after its chairman, a judge. It issued an interim report on hours and wages on 20 March 1919; a report on nationalisation was published later.

In the event, it made three reports on wages and hours, reflecting the various interests represented on the commission. Six members wanted the miners' claims conceded in full; the chairman and three others (all businessmen) recommended an immediate seven-hour day, to be reduced to six hours in 1921 if the economic conditions of the industry justified it. There were recommendations of a wage increase of two shillings a day for adults, and a levy of one penny per ton of coal to improve the housing and amenities of the mining districts. The mine-owner representatives had even less generous recommendations(31). The Government accepted the Chairman's report and so did the miners - in a national ballot - and they called off the strike.

The final report was issued on 20 June. This time, seven members recommended nationalisation and one other was in favour of reorganisation of the mines by district - something similar to what happened to the railway industry. The three coal owners and two of the businessmen wanted the ownership of the mines to be left as it was. Lloyd George offered the 'reorganisation by district' plan, but the miner's conference angrily rejected it - seven out of thirteen members of the commission had voted for nationalisation. The miners considered that if the opinion of a majority of the commission could not be accepted, then the commission had been a bluff.

The reorganisation that Lloyd George offered the miners was the most 'collectivist' that the House of Commons was likely to accept. A virtual general strike may have been prevented, but a strong feeling of frustration and bitterness had been established in the mining areas, which was to affect industrial relations there for many years to come.

Some minor recommendations of the Sankey Commission were enacted. Three separate Acts ensued, one of which limited the miners' working day

to seven hours. The Mining Industry Act set up a Mines Department, which was not a very effective body. A machinery of negotiation was set up which was so limited as to be useless. The Mines Department did establish a penny per ton levy which was used to build pithead baths, institutes, and provide scholarships. The third statute was an emergency act which temporarily limited profits and extended the period of governmental control.

The pay increases obtained as a result of the Sankey Commission also proved very temporary. By early 1920, inflation had eroded them. Further negotiations about pay broke down on a question of productivity, that is, how large an increase in coal production was needed to compensate for the wage increases. A strike was called for 25 September 1920, and the Triple Alliance's representatives met on 22 September. Some NUR members were unwilling to strike, because they earned less than miners. J.H. Thomas, the NUR'S General Secretary, persuaded the miners that they would have to prolong the negotiations if they wanted NUR support in a strike, and it was deferred until 16 October 1920, the NUR agreeing to put in their support on 24 October 1920(32). The government's response was to rush through the Emergency Powers Act and to set up direct talks between Lloyd George and the miners(33). The strikes were called off pending their outcome. The talks were virtually complete by October 28. There was an immediate award to the miners of an increase of two shillings per shift, a settlement that was to last until March 31 1921.

Early in 1921, the miners and the coal-owners started negotiations to decide what was to follow this settlement. The miners' main concern was to have a national wage based on a national pool of coal revenues. Unfortunately it became evident during the negotiations that the terms of trade were becoming adverse. Competition from other countries had pushed

down the export price of British coal, but there was worse. Under the Treaty of Versailles, Britain was entitled to reparations from Germany, and they began to be paid partly in coal. International competition was bad enough, but the miners now had to compete with what was, in effect, a free gift.

### 'Black Friday'

The Government stopped financially supporting the national pool of coal as soon as it could - 31 March 1921. The negotiations between the miners and the mine-owners were broken off when this was announced on February 22, and the owners began posting notices at pits saying that from 1 April, wages would be paid at district, not national, rates. For somewhere like South Wales, which depended upon exporting most of its coal, this meant that wages would be practically halved(34). Not surprisingly, the miners came out on strike as soon as the controls ended, in April 1921. This time, they had approached their other two partners in the Triple Alliance beforehand, and for the first time in its history asked for its help. The NUR decided that strike action would depend upon the other partner in the alliance - the Transport Workers - taking similar action(35).

The NUR arranged a joint meeting between their E.C. and that of the Transport Workers for the 8 July, and wrote to other relevant unions including the RCA. The Association's E.C. decided they needed a special general conference, which was held in the Euston Theatre on the 11 April(36). The Triple Alliance strike had been fixed for the following day. The Government declared a 'State of Emergency', issued a royal proclamation mobilising the armed forces, and made available a subsidy so that the miners' wage cuts could be applied more slowly. Negotiations

between the coal-owners and the miners re-opened and the Triple Alliance strike was postponed to the 15 April, but the negotiations broke down almost immediately on the question of a national settlement (37).

The Triple Alliance had decided that supervisory, professional, and technical staff in collieries, in transport and on the railways should be asked to join them, and invited the RCA and ASLEF executives to meet the Triple Alliance Committee on 13 April. The RCA said they could not undertake to join in the strike planned for 15 April without consulting their members; the problem was that the special conference on the 11 April had said the branches should be circularised to determine if there was support for a strike. The following telegram was sent to all the Association's branches:

'Triple Alliance asks us to join impending strike. Please get members to consider coal dispute facts given in special conference circular eleventh instant at mass meetings tomorrow and wire me result immediately. No time for further conference but your executive strongly recommend participation believing vital interests of all organised workers involved. Locomotive society have decided to join strike, <sup>Walkden!</sup>  
There was some discussion, but eventually the Executive decided by fourteen to nine that the telegram should be sent as worded (38).

Later that day, at 9 p.m., the Executive met again. Walkden, the general secretary, informed them that the Great Western Company was pressing the other railway companies to cut salaries by 25 per cent. It was decided to send further telegrams to all branches including this information. Then as many as could went back to their areas to assess the mood of the membership (39).

The Executive met again on Friday 15 April. The replies from branches showed that only sixty-seven wanted to strike. (There were 478 branches in 1921.) It was reported that there had been considerable dissension at the mass meetings held over the country. All the same, a motion was tabled to the effect that the Executive should call the

Association out on strike, but before it could be debated a deputation once more had to go to a meeting of the Triple Alliance(40).

They found the Triple Alliance Strike had been abandoned and, worse, the Alliance itself appeared to have broken up. In Labour Movement folklore that day, Friday 15 April 1921, became 'Black Friday' (41).

### 'Red' Friday

Once the possibility of a Triple Alliance strike had receded, the miners were in a hopeless position. They continued their resistance until the end of June, but by then they had to admit defeat. There was to be no national pool nor national wages system. A government subsidy was provided to slow down the drop in wages, but eventually this was phased out and the regional differences were much as expected. In the Midlands and South Yorkshire there was little decline, but wage rates dropped to about half their earlier level in places that depended on coal exports.

Other industries suffered cuts in their wages after strikes: engineering, building, ship-building, printing, and cotton were all affected(42). Some NUR members and most of ASLEF's had to accept wage cuts but the RCA managed to avoid them(43). This was more due to circumstances than design. ASLEF and the NUR had obtained cost-of-living increases in 1920 and these were eroded first in Scotland and then in England. The Association were still negotiating their cost-of-living allowance and also the working of their sliding scale system. [For further details, see Chapter 2,] As the cost of living declined sharply after 1922, all these wage-cuts did not have as severe an effect as might

have been expected in early 1921.

The miners' fears about the aftermath of 'Black Friday' were only partly realised. In 1923, the French occupation of the Rhineland led to a policy of passive resistance on the part of the Germans. The resultant lack of competition from German coal exports brought back some prosperity to those British coal-fields which depended on exporting coal(44). This lasted until 1925, when there was a double blow to the coal industry: foreign competition was now back at its most fierce and the Bank of England had returned to the Gold Standard at the pre-war rate of exchange i. e. £1 = \$4.86(45).

It had been possible to maintain this rate of exchange before the war, when Britain had a much stronger economy. By 1925, many of its far-flung markets had been lost to other countries and some products were in much less demand than before the war. Britain could only maintain the pre-war parity of the pound with great difficulty; the return to the Gold Standard meant that exports became more expensive. In the event, coal exports fell drastically(46). The economic policy may now seem wrong-headed but it accorded with contemporary perceptions of the economy.

The economist J.M. Keynes diagnosed the policy's unsoundness and he campaigned against it without success. For most commentators of the day, a return to the gold standard at the pre-war parity was essential. One summed up his arguments under four heads:

1. That other nations were expecting England to return to gold and failure to do so would be a blow to English credit.
2. A return to gold would reveal the real balance of payments and would force public attention on the failure of British exports to compete.
3. It would facilitate foreign loans.
4. It would prevent future 'unsound' experiments by Socialist Governments which



might divert English people from the only real solution of their problems - economy and hard work. (47)

These arguments are very revealing; they illustrate that the return to the gold standard had an emotional attraction likely to be proof against rationality. What was not said was that the policy would benefit bankers, but not workers. Workers, first those in export industries and then others, would have to become more productive, make economies, and yet might still lose their jobs(48).

Black Friday had seen the end of the Triple Alliance, but the negotiations preceding it had demonstrated that ASLEF and the RCA could add effectiveness to any Triple Alliance dispute. In June 1925, it was proposed that a new Industrial Alliance should be established and the RCA was asked to join it(49). A specific invitation was offered possibly because the Association's usefulness had been apparent in April 1921, but the conditions of membership were wide enough to have let in the Association in any case. The Association proposed to join the Alliance, because the railway companies were contemplating making wage reductions(50).

The railway companies' proposals for economies were presented to their trade unions on 25 June 1925. The companies said that they were in an unprecedented depression: labour costs were estimated at 155 per cent higher than in 1914, whilst railway rates and fares had only increased by 50 per cent. They proposed a voluntary reduction in wages - somewhere between 5 and 10 per cent. The unions' negotiators asked for the proposals in writing, agreeing not to publicise them for the time being. The unions needed to confer before their next joint meeting with the management, and the Association decided to meet ASLEF and the NUR separately if they could not have a joint meeting(51). But by 12

July, ASLEF had withdrawn from the discussions, so the other two executives considered the railway companies' draft. It suggested a 5 per cent reduction on all wages, salaries and directors' fees; the sliding-scale bonus would continue. The cuts would last for a minimum of a year, after which either side could give three months notice that they intended to end the arrangements.

The Association did not agree with the proposals, but decided to continue negotiating(52). All the trade unions with members working for the railways met on 22 July. Only the Boilermakers had not yet reached a decision; all the rest were for rejection. The Unions formally rejected the proposals on 28 July. The companies said they would implement other proposals and attempt to reduce staff(53). In November 1925 the National Wages Board considered the wage cuts as originally proposed, rejecting them by a majority vote; a minority report from representatives of the LMS and LNER companies said there should be wage cuts(54). (The companies did not let the matter rest, and finally negotiated a 2% per cent cut in July 1928(55).)

Although the proposals of 1925 never took effect, they spurred the Association into joining the Industrial Alliance and taking another step towards militancy. The Industrial Alliance itself came to nothing; the NUR withdrew after failing with a proposal on trade-union amalgamations(56). The Association was also forced to drop out after a special conference on 10 and 11 January refused to endorse its membership. It was a close card vote (28,400 against, 23,400 for). The Treasurer also made an appeal at this conference for cash to bolster the Association's strike fund(57).

The Transport Workers, who had proposed the Industrial Alliance, waited until October 1927 before they finally dropped the idea which, in fact, probably had little chance of success because the criteria for

membership were so wide that the Alliance might simply have become a duplicate of the TUC(58).

The Association's Treasurer's appeal for funds was made because the overture to the General Strike had begun. Some of the coal companies, especially those dependent on exports, were experiencing difficulties even before the return to the Gold Standard. This had the effect that Keynes predicted, in the industry that he had forecast to be the first to suffer(59). On 30 June 1925, the mine-owners gave notice that, in a months time, wages would be reduced and some districts, such as in Northumberland, would suffer drastically. The mine-owners hinted that if the legislation that limited the miners to a seven-hour working day could be modified with the miners agreeing an eight-hour day, then the effect of the wage reductions would be less drastic. The miners would not accept this and, on 3 July, refused to meet the mine-owners again unless the proposed reductions were withdrawn(60), and approached the General Council of the TUC, which had recently been empowered to intervene in disputes if large numbers of workers were involved(61). (A.G. Walkden was a member of the Council over this period and was to be personally involved in many of the TUC's decisions during the General Strike.)

When the miners met the General Council on 10 July, it endorsed their action and began to consider how they could be assisted. The General Council set up a nine-man Special Industrial Committee, of which Walkden was a member, to keep in touch with the miners and to recommend what action would be required(62). A meeting of the transport unions was also arranged to organise a coal embargo.

It took place at Caxton Hall, and included the Executives of the NUR, ASLEF and the Association. The Transport Workers' Executive was at its own union's biennial conference but pledged its support. The NS & FU (the seamen's union) did not think it was involved(63). Its leadership

had been thought to be hostile to a coal embargo some days earlier(64). It was agreed to enforce the embargo; the Association decided to call a special delegate conference if necessary. At another meeting on 29 July, it was decided to start the coal embargo at midnight on 31 July, when the coal-owners' notices ran out(65).

The coal embargo never happened; early on 31 July the Government announced a subsidy to maintain miners' wages at their current level for about nine months, during which time a Royal Commission would consider the state of the coal-mining industry and attempt to resolve the current crisis. Friday, 31 July 1925, became known as 'Red Friday', because the power of the trade unions had forced the Government to change its policy. It was, perhaps, also felt that the memory of 'Black Friday' had been erased.

### The General Strike

The Government was not solely motivated by the threat of a coal embargo. On July 11 it had set up an independent court of inquiry into the dispute, chaired by H. P. Macmillan, a Scottish lawyer who had held a non-political law appointment in the 1924 Labour government(66). The miners refused to have anything to do with it, but its report, published on July 28, was largely based on conjectures about their point of view.

Another reason for the Government's decision was that it was not ready for a confrontation. Coal stocks needed to be built up. The Supply and Transport Committee, the emergency organisation which dated from 1919, had to establish satellites all over the country. A non-governmental body was now set up to recruit volunteers who would take the place of striking workers. This was known as the O. M. S. - the

Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies(67). Thus the Government and its supporters made good use of the nine months that were to elapse before the General Strike.

The TUC did not use the time anything like as well. This was partly because many union leaders did not want to be involved in a general dispute. Over the winter, what had started as a proposed coal embargo had turned into an incipient General Strike. A 'general' or 'national' strike - and it is pertinent that the trade union leaders preferred the latter name - had a long history as a part of socialist theory. Left-wing activists from the Chartists to the Syndicalists had seen it as the decisive class-war weapon(68). For this reason, the trade union leaders stressed that there was no constitutional point at issue; what was in prospect was simply a very large-scale strike to help the miners. A slight difference of attitude between two of the more important trade union leaders is illustrative. At the meeting at Central Hall, Westminster, on 30 July 1925, when the details of the coal embargo were determined, J.H. Thomas wanted the issue raised in the Commons in an adjournment debate. Ernest Bevin, the General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers union, disagreed. He wanted it to be left as an industrial issue, not to be associated with anything constitutional(69). Bevin's hope was bound to fail, since large-scale industrial action is bound to have constitutional implications. The Government found little difficulty in using this aspect of the strike in their criticism of the TUC(70).

The Commission began its work in September 1925, and published its report, the 'Samuel Report', in March 1926(71). As a means of settling a long-running dispute, the report must be considered a failure. Most of its recommendations were for the long-term restructuring of the coal industry. Wage-cuts were the only short-term expedient the Commissioners

could propose, but they said that wages should be determined by national agreements and that longer hours should not be imposed. It was also recommended that the wage subsidy be withdrawn, and not reinstated again. The long-term recommendations were drastic. Coal-royalties were to be nationalised but the reorganisation was to be carried out without any general measure of compulsion. The miners were offered a mixture of improved amenities: more pithead baths, better housing, and annual holidays. As this was to be 'when prosperity returns' it was not simply a sop, but was sop in the sky(72).

The miners were prepared for a reorganisation that would make the industry more efficient and able to pay a reasonable wage to a smaller workforce(73). Many mine-owners, particularly the proprietors of small mines which were likely to disappear in any shake-up, were opposed to reorganisation and most of the Government's support was temperamentally opposed to the idea of any nationalisation.

Once the Samuel Report appeared, negotiations were resumed. For a time, the Report was used both by the miners and the mine-owners to demonstrate the justice of their case. The mine-owners invoked it in the cause of wage-cuts; the miners said it supported their insistence on national agreements. The Special Industrial Committee of the TUC persuaded the miners to maintain negotiations even though the mine-owners were behaving as if nothing had happened. But the end of the subsidy that had been granted the previous summer was approaching; mine-owners were exhibiting notices at the pits showing that they proposed post-subsidy wage-rates even lower than the miners had expected.

Although the TUC was attempting to persuade the miners to negotiate reasonably, the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, and his Cabinet were reluctant to put any pressure on the mine-owners either to compromise or concede. The negotiations dragged on throughout April and neither side

would move. The miners would not discuss wage-cuts; they suspected that nothing would be done to reorganise the industry and they were not prepared to make a considerable sacrifice for the sake of the industry's viability if the other side was not prepared to concede what, by comparison, would be a relatively modest loss.

The TUC realised that the impending withdrawal of the subsidy was bringing the affair to a head, and other trade unions would not be able to give the miners some sympathetic help without a consensual decision on it, so a meeting for representatives of the trade unions affiliated to the TUC was held in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Road, on 29 April 1926(74). The Association began an ordinary Executive meeting on the same morning at their usual meeting place, the Bonnington Hotel, Southampton Row. Walkden, the General Secretary, was also a member of the Special Industrial Committee of the TUC, so he could only pay fleeting visits to the E.C. meeting(75). The TUC's meeting at the Memorial Hall remained in session pending the outcome of the miners' negotiations with their employers; they were still proceeding when the Association's Executive visited the Memorial Hall in the afternoon of April 29, so the Executive returned to its usual business meeting.

For some days the wage negotiations had been a foursome, with the Special Industrial Committee and the Mining Federation on one side and, on the other, the mine-owners and the Government. This narrowed down to the SIC and the Government when, on 30 April, the miners rejected the mine-owners' offer. The negotiations finally broke down later on the same day(76). This was reported to the Memorial Hall meeting, still in session after an adjournment the previous day. The meeting decided to re-convene the following morning; the Association's Executive attended there and, after the decisive vote to strike(77), placed itself in the hands of the TUC's General Council.

Steps were taken to co-ordinate the actions of the three railway unions and strike pay was fixed at £1 per member plus 5/- for each child, up to a maximum of £2 per week(78). The Executive reconvened in the afternoon; the Assistant General Secretary, G. Lathan, had met with J. Marchbank of the NUR who, because the NUR and ASLEF were not on the best of terms, left it to the Association to organise a triple meeting(79). This took place and a complete stoppage on the railways was arranged(80).

It had been decided that the whole of the Association's money on deposit at Barclays Bank should be placed in a current account with the CWS Bank. Various other banking arrangements were made so that there would be £77,000 available to the Association on Monday, 3 May. Five members of the Executive were selected to stay in London. They did not include Walkden, who was still working with the Special Industrial Committee. The rest of the Executive dispersed to their districts to organise the strike(81).

It was due to begin at midnight on 3 May, but negotiations to prevent it continued over the weekend between representatives of the TUC (Pugh, Thomas and Citrine) and the Government (Baldwin, Birkenhead, Steel-Maitland, and Wilson)(82). These negotiations were marked by a series of accidents which appeared to have frayed people's nerves and contributed to the final break-down of negotiations in the early hours of 3 May(83).

It is not intended in here to discuss in detail what happened during the nine days of the strike, which is well documented and discussed in detail in numerous accounts(84). Its beginnings have been presented in enough detail to explain the Association's involvement, on which the ensuing further account concentrates. The main activity of clerks during the strike was to man its 'bureaucracy', or as one source put it:



'These striking R.C.A. members proved to be invaluable to the strikers, serving on the various joint committees, taking minutes of meetings, editing and mimeographing strike bulletins, ... '(85).

This work was important, but unlikely to involve clerks in any spectacular incidents or attract to them any special managerial displeasure. But the Association also recruited station-masters, controllers and other grades on whom the running of the railway depended. The movement of trains was then controlled by moving them from one signal-box's area to the next one. The more signal-boxes there were in commission, the quicker a train could pass. If a box was not working, two areas would have to be controlled from one box, and traffic would pass through the area more slowly. This effect would be exacerbated according to the number of boxes out of action. When a signalman was on strike the station-master could probably man the box and work the trains, but in a number of areas station-masters came out on strike(86). The withdrawal of their labour, directly and immediately crucial to the the railways' working, meant that they were particularly likely to be identified as malcontents.

Another function which these highly experienced senior staff would have been expected to perform, should they not be on strike, was the superintendence of the 'volunteer' staff recruited during the strike. Lack of resources for training and supervising them is probably one reason why, apparently, they were put to such little use. At Paddington, 6,000 were recruited but only 2,500 were actually used(87).

The Association's response to the strike is of particular interest because it was the only white-collar union to be officially called out on strike. White-collar unions were not considered to be industrially militant; clerks and officials were thought more likely to support their employers than than fellow manual workers. This chapter's evidence shows

that some of the Association's membership presented characteristics that accorded with received opinions about clerical workers. There had been the low response to the appeal to the branches during the the 'Black Friday' crisis, the reluctance to pay the higher subscription widely stated to be for an industrial fund, and the rejection of the Special Delegate Conference's recommendation on membership of the Industrial Alliance. The voting in the latter case was closer than that at the 'Black Friday' Special Delegate Conference, which may indicate that the membership at large were gradually accepting the idea of a shared problem, with the miners in the front line facing a more general attack on wage levels. The railway companies' proposals for wage cuts are likely to have been fairly well known amongst the Association's membership by the time the Industrial Alliance was at issue.

It is not easy to determine what was the response of the Association's membership to the strike call. The Association's officers appear to have believed that a large proportion of its membership had come out in the first few days. The issue of the Association's *Railway Service Journal for June 1926* presents a favourable picture of the members' response and it is supported by a member's recollections published in 1976(88). D.A. Wilson, of Bradford, reports that before the Strike, remarks were heard around the office such as, "What me? Strike for the miners? Not bloody likely! Why, we'll be striking next for bricklayers and dustmen and God knows who - we'll never be working!" This attitude, which he says was not uncommon, led him to expect some opposition when the Strike was called. He was chairman of a meeting on the evening before the Strike and expected a hostile reception to the news of an official strike, but the opposition was feeble and soon crumbled away. He has claimed that out of four hundred railway clerks, three hundred and sixty went out on strike.

Walkden said that fifty thousand of the sixty-seven thousand members were on strike on 4 May. G.A. Phillips, in his study of the General Strike(89), thinks this was almost certainly an exaggeration. It may well have been, but there are no official figures for all the four main-line railway companies until Friday 7th May. There are some official data for the London Underground railways, for the first few days, but they seem unreliable and unlikely to be useful. Such official figures as are available for each day of the Strike, but excluding the London Underground, are at Appendix VII. Figures are available for only two companies on 4 May, but they appear incomplete and unreliable. Inconsistencies as between the first and later days are such as to suggest that the companies had not devised ways of collecting data that were reliable from the first day, although they were likely to be more reliable thereafter. As the figures for the GWR and the LMS suggest that at least twenty-two thousand of their white-collar workers - likely to be mostly members of the Association - were out on the first day, the Association was not unreasonable in its contemporary estimate of fifty thousand on 4 May, even though later analysis casts some doubt on it. The highest official figure for the members of staff on strike from the four companies is for Saturday 8 May, when forty thousand, three hundred and ninety were counted as striking. (Most clerks worked on Saturdays in 1926). The probable percentage figures for staff on strike for each day are:

7 May 30%, 8 May 39.2%, 10 May 37.8%, 11 May 36.4%, 12 May 35.2%, 13 May, 35.2%.

### Post-Strike Difficulties

The General Council of the TUC ended the Strike on 12 May(90), but they made no arrangements for a general return to work, leaving these to individual unions(91). The railway managements did not accept the settlement in a charitable manner(92). The miners did not accept it at all, and the Mining Lockout dragged on until November, when reduced pay, district agreements and an eight-hour-day were accepted. The shortage of coal led to lay-offs in many other industries and strengthened the power of the railway managements to discipline workers who had struck, especially those who had 'positions of trust' and others who had been especially active during the Strike(93).

The management of the GWR were informed that the Strike had been called off on 12 May and the other companies were almost certainly similarly informed. The GWR then posted notices announcing re-employment for only enough workers to run the restricted train service that was expected to be all that was immediately possible. Other workers would be informed when their services were required(94). This action seems not to have been taken for operational and economic reasons alone, although the management could no doubt have so justified it. There was some feeling, evidently shared by a number of railway managers, that the strikes of the previous few years had reduced the 'discipline' of railway staff, a feature held to be particularly important to the railway service. The General Strike seems to have provided an opportunity for the renewal of this 'discipline'. It was suggested that employees' 'breach of contract' should be invoked and it was also hoped that the membership of trade unions by supervisory staff would be reviewed(95). This attitude was revealed in a discussion between the Minister of Labour and representatives of the railway managements on the day the strike

ended. The Government naturally wanted as quick and orderly a return to work as possible; the railway managers were urged to act 'cannily' to avoid further upset. It was thought that they should 'meet' the trade unions, preferably by 'the various Trade Unions getting into immediate touch with the Associations of Employers concerned in order that, if possible, a satisfactory agreement may be reached' (96). The assumptions that the initiatives to ensure a rapid return would come from the trade unions and that the workers would be ready for sacrifices were probably made because the strike had been called off by the unions quite unconditionally. 'The Government had made no bargain whatsoever, nor had they entered into any commitments.'

The railway managers discussed with the Minister the four points which embodied the policy upon which they hoped to settle the Strike. These covered: the railway companies' abrogation of an obligation to re-employ any striker; the reservation of their legal rights to claim damages; their right to refuse to re-employ anyone guilty of violence, intimidation, or damaging railway property; and not to re-employ senior staff who had been strikers(97). This last point was included because some railway managers related the perceived loss of discipline to the industrial organisation of senior railway staff. This perception led to some persecution of these grades after the Strike. The railway managements could be confident of support from the Government because the Minister said, 'so far as the Government was concerned, full sympathy was expressed with these points, as also with the restoration of discipline' (98).

The hopes that the 'hard-line' settlement could be imposed upon the railway workers were dashed the following day, when most of them refused to return to work if all the striking railway workers were not re-employed(99). This attitude on the part of the railway workforce made

it difficult to implement the 'hard-line' policy; it also made any return to work difficult. The continuation of the coal lockout and the delay before the general level of trade could recover from the Strike meant that many of the pre-Strike railway force would not be needed for the attenuated railway service immediately after the Strike. The 'hard-line' policy could have worked if only a few strikers returned, but the strikers' solidarity meant that some sort of compromise had to be negotiated with the trade unions(100).

The GWR management initially tried to get their workers back by widely distributing a message which presented their 'hard-line' position, but said there would be no wage reductions. It did not say that management intended to retain a week's wages which the strikers had already earned. (This was possible because the custom was for wages to be paid a week in arrear.) On the morning of 13 May, the RCA and the NUR sent letters to the railway managements saying that they were urging their members to return to work, but that when they attempted to do so, difficulties were placed in their way. The unions asked that the return should be made in the spirit indicated by the Prime Minister. The reply of the General Manager of the GWR was little more than the message which already been broadcast and exhibited on a poster at all GWR stations(101). Later, but still during the morning of 13 May, the three executives of the RCA, the NUR and ASLEF met at the ASLEF headquarters in Hampstead and considered the difficulties facing returning railway strikers. They decided to send a joint letter to the secretary of the General Managers Committee(102).

## The Post-Strike Settlement Negotiations

An emergency meeting of the Railway Companies Association was held on the afternoon of 13 May. It received the joint letter from the three railway trade unions which said that they had called their members out on strike again, but would like to meet the railway managements so that a settlement could be arranged(103). The union executives were informed that they could meet the General Managers at once, and a meeting was arranged for 4.30 p.m. that afternoon(104).

Walkden described the railway managers as 'exceedingly hard and angry' (105). The managers said that the unions did not disguise the fact that they had blundered(106). The negotiations began with a discussion about the statements made by representatives of the railway companies and the notices that had been exhibited at stations. Eventually, draft terms for a settlement were handed to the union representatives(107). They became the basis for the settlement under which the railway workers returned and which overshadowed the relationship between them and their employers for the next few years; here is the draft.

1. Those employees of the Railway Companies who have gone out on strike to be taken back to work as soon as traffic offers and work can be found for them.
2. In order to facilitate the early return of all men possible:-

(a) The Guaranteed Week for those classes of employees covered by the agreements with Railway Companies to which the National Union of Railwaymen are parties, to be suspended forthwith, but to be restored as soon as traffic becomes normal.

(b) Work available to be distributed as far as reasonably possible so as to equalise the number of days work for each man.

3. Each person as taken back to be re-instated in the position he held prior to the strike.

4. Each weekly paid person who had gone on strike to forfeit a week's wages at normal rates. Each monthly paid person to forfeit one-fourth of a month's salary.

5. This arrangement is not to apply to:-

(a) Persons who have been guilty of violence or intimidation.

(b) Persons in supervisory grades, including Station Masters,



Goods Agents, and Clerks in Special Class and Class 1; but each such case is to be separately considered and decided by the Companies.

The Trade Unions agree that each man who left his work without notice has broken his contract of service and that the Companies do not by reinstatement surrender any rights that they may possess.

The trade unions realised that the railway companies could not be expected to re-employ all their striking workers immediately, but they could not manage without some of them; railway operation involves specialized work, much of which has no equivalent outside the railway industry and has to be performed at all hours of the day and night. Even if the railway managers used some of the volunteers they had acquired during the strike, they needed some of the strikers. The unions accepted the first paragraph of the draft terms, but insisted that the words 'men should be reinstated at grade seniority at each station' should be included. This was conceded.

It was decided that discussions about the 'Guaranteed Week', should be held over until after the strike, but it appears to have been tacitly agreed that there would not be enough work for all the workers to be taken back forthwith. The fourth clause of the draft terms was, predictably, not acceptable to the unions, especially as the company representatives appeared minded to enforce it strongly(108). The companies were prepared to forgo this demand only if the notorious 'clause two' was inserted, i.e.

"The Trade Unions admit that in calling a strike they committed a wrongful act against the Companies and agree that the Companies do not by reinstatement surrender their legal rights to claim damages arising out of the strike from strikers and others responsible."

When Walkden explained the unions' acceptance of this clause to his Association's Executive, it was not in terms of a trade-off. He said that the union representatives had allowed the clause to stand after an assurance had been given that there would be no action taken in respect of it. The companies insisted upon its inclusion, 'as it was the only feature which left them with any shred of dignity' (109). It is not suggested that he deliberately misrepresented the negotiations, but it must have been very difficult for the trade union leaders to accept the clause and anodyne remarks consistent with Walkden's account may well have been made on the management side. The problem of the sequestration of a week's wages was not finally settled until the following afternoon; the rest of the evening was taken up with discussion of the exclusion of supervisory staff from the strike settlement. The negotiations on this point were adjourned at about 10 p.m., and resumed at 10.30 a.m. the following morning.

After the trade union representatives had left, Lord Ashfield, the General Manager of London's underground railway told the other General Managers that he wanted a quick settlement for the 'tube railways' and was prepared to settle on the basis of what had already been agreed, that is, clauses 1, 2 and 5 of the final settlement. He did not want to dismiss or remove any of his supervisors, so the further negotiations about supervisors would not concern him (110).

Lord Ashfield was no stranger to the affairs of the Railway Clerks Association. From 1916 to 1919, as Sir Albert Stanley, he had been President of the Board of Trade in the Coalition Government headed by Lloyd George (111). The President of the Board of Trade, prior to the

creation of the Ministry of Transport, was responsible for government policy concerning the railway industry. Lord Ashfield had presided over the recognition of the Association's right to represent both clerks and supervisors, and may have felt that some of the comments which apportioned part of the blame for the extent of the strike to the organisation of supervisors in unions were a personal reflection on himself(112). As the manager of an undertaking that was separate from the mainline railways as far as labour were concerned(113), he did not share the other managers' most intractable problems, and his attitude in the Strike was more balanced than that of some other employers and many newspapers. This is the opinion of the authors of the official history of London Transport; to illustrate their opinion they quote a notice he issued on 3 May 1926. Its reasonable tone is in marked contrast to that of a similar notice issued to GWR employees on 2 May 1926(114).

#### 'NOTICE TO THE STAFF

The regrettable dispute which has arisen with regard to the terms and conditions of employment in coal mines cannot justify the stoppage of those services which are essential to the public welfare. While it is recognised that the loyalty which has been shown by all classes of workers to the miners is admirable, it should not be forgotten that there is a wider and greater loyalty which should be shown to the nation at large.

In this crisis each man must decide for himself but we hope that we can rely upon the staff remaining at work. There is no difference between the Companies and the staff, but both have a duty to the public which they should discharge. The Companies are bound to discharge to the best of their ability and resources their duty in providing public passenger services. Those members of the staff who do likewise are assured of their positions.

This is a notice which the GWR sent to all their stations and also to some of their workers at their homes(115):

'The National Union of Railwaymen have intimated that railwaymen have been asked to strike without notice to-morrow night. Each Great Western man has to decide his course of action, but I appeal to all of you to hesitate before you break your contracts of service with the old Company, before you inflict grave injury upon the Railway Industry, and before you arouse ill feeling in the Railway service which will take years to remove. Railway Companies and Railwaymen have demonstrated that they

can settle their disputes by direct negotiations. The Mining Industry should be advised to do the same. Remember that your means of living and your personal interests are involved, and that Great Western men are trusted to be loyal to their conditions of service in the same manner as they expect the Company to carry out their obligations and agreements.'

PADDINGTON STATION  
May 2nd, 1926

FELIX J.C. POOLE  
General Manager.

Lord Ashfield and the trade unions conducted their separate negotiations after 10 p.m. on 13 May. Walkden confirmed that he agreed to abandon entirely the Managers' proposals with regard to supervisory grades(116). A settlement was reached in the early hours of Friday morning, 14 May(117). Station staff were to report for duty on Saturday 15 May and Headquarters staff the following Monday. In connection with this settlement, it should be remembered that, normally, the underground railways of London only carry passengers and that their demand for intra-urban carriage would not be affected by the coal lock-out as was the traffic carried by the main-line railway companies. Their motive power would also be less affected because imported coal could be brought up the Thames to the power stations which generated electricity to move the trains. Walkden thought that this settlement proved helpful when negotiation continued with the General Managers of the main-line companies on the morning of 14 May.

When the negotiations with the General Managers were resumed, a new formula was offered to the unions to explain how it was intended to deal with the supervisory staff who had been on strike. It was to replace paragraph 5(b) in the draft terms of settlement:

'The Companies intimated that arising out of the strike it would be necessary to remove certain persons to other positions but no man's salary or wages would be reduced.

The Unions undertake:-

- (1) Not again to instruct men to strike without proper notice.
- (2) That Station Masters, Goods Agents and others

holding positions of special responsibility shall be excluded from any future strike. The Unions to furnish security for observance of this clause in the sum of £100,000.'

After much discussion, the trade union representatives offered an alternative form of words :-

'Persons in Supervisory grades in the special class who have participated in the strike may be transferred to positions other than those they occupied prior to the strike, each such case to be separately considered and decided by the Companies.

The Companies will notify the Unions by Monday next the names of men whom they propose to transfer and will afford the men an opportunity of having an advocate to present their cases to the General Manager.

In no case shall any such employees have their salaries or wages reduced.

The Unions agree to give no support of any kind to their workers who take any unauthorised action.

The Unions recognise that supervisory employees in the special class should not be encouraged to take part in any strike.'

The managers objected to this modification because they did not intend to confine their policy of removal to other positions to persons in the special class and supervisory grades. This point was agreed by the trade unions.

Although it appeared that agreement had been reached not to withhold payment for work done prior to the strike if the trade unions allowed Clause 2 to stand in the final agreement (118), there was some doubt whether this had been completely settled. The chairmen of each of the four companies were consulted by telephone and the companies agreed to pay the money. This removed the final obstacle to the agreement and it was signed at 4.30 p.m. on Friday 14 May 1926, in the following terms:

TERMS OF SETTLEMENT AS BETWEEN THE RAILWAY COMPANIES ON THE ONE HAND AND THE NATIONAL UNION OF RAILWAYMEN, ASSOCIATED SOCIETY OF LOCOMOTIVE ENGINEERS & FIREMEN, AND THE RAILWAY CLERKS' ASSOCIATION ON THE OTHER.

1. Those employees of the Railway Companies who have gone out on strike to be taken back to work as soon as traffic offers and work can be found for them. The principle to be followed in reinstating to be seniority in each grade at each station, depot or office.
2. The Trade Unions admit that in calling a strike committed a wrongful act against the Companies and agree that the Companies do not by reinstatement surrender their legal rights to claim damages arising out of the strike from strikers and others responsible.
3. The Unions undertake:-
  - (a) not again to instruct their members to strike without previous negotiations with the Companies.
  - (b) to give no support of any kind to their members who take any unauthorised action.
  - (c) not to encourage Supervisory employees in the Special Class to take part in any strike.
4. The Companies intimated that arising out of the strike it may be necessary to remove certain persons to other positions, but no such person's salary or wages will be reduced. Each Company will notify the Unions within one week of the names of men whom they propose to transfer and will afford each man an opportunity of having an advocate to present his case to the General Manager.
5. The settlement shall not extend to persons who have been guilty of violence or intimidation.

On behalf of the General  
Managers' Conference:-

FELIX J.C. POLE

H. G. BURGESS

H. A. WALKER

R. L. WEDGWOOD

On behalf of the  
Railway Trade Unions:-

J. H. THOMAS ) National  
C. T. CRAMP ) Union of  
                  ) Railwaymen  
J. BROMLEY ) Associated  
                  ) Society of  
                  ) Locomotive  
                  ) Engineers  
                  ) & Firemen

R. H. SELBIE

A. G. WALKDEN ) Railway  
                  ) Clerks'  
                  ) Association

Dated this fourteenth day of May, Nineteen Hundred and twenty-six. '

Difficulties with the Settlement

The unions and the railway managers both hoped that the agreement would ensure that the railways would get back to work. The union negotiators understood that the effects of the miners' continued lock-out would mean that railway traffic would be reduced both because of generally reduced industrial activity and because the supply of coal for railway locomotives would be limited. What the union negotiators did not realise was how the railway managers were going to implement the settlement and how many supervisors were to be disciplined for striking - by demotion, by removal to jobs in different localities, by both strategies or by simply withholding reinstatement. The first signs came when Association members reported back to work. They were asked to hand in their season tickets and were then told that they would be sent for when there was work for them. Applications for privilege tickets, meaning for travel at reduced rates, were also being refused(119).

Railway workers' cheap travel is more than a fringe benefit; it has been argued that railways have been able to pay lower wages than other employers because of the value of cheap and free travel. It is a very easy way of augmenting wages; cheap or free seats on time-tabled passenger trains cost the railway management very little. For the railway employee, on the other hand, concessionary fares often enable him to live where where housing is cheap, but distant from his workplace. When the agreement of 14 May was under discussion, a suggestion from the management had been that holidays should be arranged during the period of short-time working. Any railway worker would have reckoned on his cheap

travel in planning his holiday; railway workers' lives are built around their cheap fares in a number of ways and their sudden loss was a real hardship. It was an immediate example of the post-strike problems that dominated the Executive meeting of 16 May, which considered those that arisen so far.

An important concern was the amount which had been expended on the strike. Strike pay had been paid up to May 14, and it transpired that £120,000 had been issued in strike cheques for the two weeks(120). Over the strike period normal methods of communication were disrupted, and disbursing strike pay to members scattered all over the country must have been extremely difficult. The Association recorded that the payments were made with the minimum of delay using the facilities of the CWS Banking Department(121). Branches were asked to send in all relevant information, including the number of members who had not been reinstated.

Two Branches - Sunderland and Barneley - reported that the National Association of Stationmasters, Agents and Yardmasters (NASAY) had made a re-appearance and copies of its literature were enclosed. It had grown out of an organisation called the North-Eastern Stationmasters Association and is referred to in the Chapter 2. Its last phase of aggression had been in the 'recognition crisis' of 1919; its new attempt at expansion took place on the border of its original area(122).

The organisation may not have been a genuine 'company union'; but that is how the Executive of the RCA perceived it, and it certainly behaved like one. Its rates of subscription and benefit were similar to those of the Association but, to quote its literature, it was 'clearly understood that the business of this Association shall be conducted on constitutional lines'. This is a clear reference to the Government's criticism of the TUC for calling the General Strike(123), and the NASAY's



renewed activity appears to have been directly related to the Association's participation. The coincidence of attempted encroachments by NASAY, or its predecessor, with the Association's threatened or actual industrial action may have been no more than opportunism at times when non-militant members of the Association would have been open to persuasion. Whether NASAY was ever managerially encouraged, supported or promoted is an open question, but there are grounds for suspicion. The RCA acted fairly quickly to frustrate the NASAY, sending a circular to all station-master members and planning a station-masters' conference(124).

For two days, the Executive met and considered the fragmentary reports which it was receiving from its branches, often without its General Secretary, who was preoccupied with TUC meetings. On 18 May the Executive joined the Executives of the other two railway trade unions for joint discussions, which took place daily until 22 May. Various post-strike issues were discussed, such as work-sharing, (the LMS was only operating on a fifty per cent basis(125)). Eventually it was decided to seek a further meeting with the railway managements. The issues the unions wanted to discuss can be summarised under five headings:

1. Reinstatement of supervisors and clerical employees.
2. Cases of intimidation.
3. Continued employment of volunteers.
4. Reinstatement of junior men in preference to seniors.
5. Men working overtime whilst others are not reinstated. (126)

The first meeting on the morning of 20 May was unproductive because no General Managers were present and no firm decisions could be made. In the afternoon, two General Managers were still absent but the unions discovered why work-sharing was opposed by management - it would penalise the workers who remained 'loyal' during the strike(127).

The following day, the General Managers submitted a draft work-sharing agreement for the bulk of the railway workforce. It gave them three days' work a week, and did not apply to non-strikers, who still enjoyed a guaranteed week's work. It also did not apply to workers suspended under clauses 4 & 5 of the May 14 Agreement. It made no provision for clerical and supervisory staff, because their work presented special difficulties(128). The Association members had to wait until 2 June for a work-sharing agreement.

Also on the 21 May, the joint trade union meeting considered an appeal from the Miners' Federation to organise a coal embargo. The railway unions asked the TUC's National Strike Committee for advice, after which they rejected the appeal. It is convenient here to sketch in the further progress of the miners' lockout(129).

The railway unions could not help the miners with further industrial action, but they could send money. Up to 25 June, the RCA had already contributed £1,000 to the Miners' Federation Appeal(130). This represented nearly one per cent of the Association's total funds at the end of 1926(131). In August, a request from the TUC for further donations had to be declined because the Association's central funds were so low(132). On 8 November, branches were circularised with the suggestion that they could help the miners by raising at least a penny a week from each member. This was an outcome of a Special TUC Conference on 3 November 1926, which had been convened about a coal embargo still

sought in support of the miners. Both ASLEF and the NUR said they could not join in a coal embargo, although the NUR attended the conference out of respect for the TUC.

All three railway unions were in a poor financial position as a result of the strike; ASLEF's was the worst (133). Industrial action is difficult for a union when funds are low, so a coal embargo would have been problematical in any case. But it is likely that the membership of the three railway trade unions were still so shaken by their experience that an enthusiastic response from them would have been doubtful even had funds been healthier. This must have been the miners' last hope, because by the end of November the lock-out was over. There is no exact date for its end, because the Miners' Federation agreed to negotiations on a district basis and districts returned to work on different days.

The terms which were obtained were, almost everywhere, heavily weighted in the mine-owners' favour. In most districts the eight-hour day was restored; the government had introduced an Eight-Hour Day Act in July 1926. Immediate wage reductions were introduced in South Wales, Scotland and the coal-fields in the North-East of England. In 1927, wages went down all over the country, and continued to drop further in 1928. The average earnings per man-shift stood at 10s 5d in the first quarter of 1926; in 1927 the comparable figure was 10s 0½d and in 1928, 9s 3¼d; this was despite the longer hours being worked (134).

We will return now to the affairs of the Association. On 21 May the Executive decided that members who had been on strike and were not yet re-employed should not pay their Association's subscription whilst they were continuing to receive benefit from the Association (135). By 26 May, it was reported that 5,573 members of the Association had not been taken back, and there were 118 suspensions under clauses 4 and 5 of the May 14 Agreement. Those suspended under clause 4 were to be

transferred, but this was not to apply to anyone suspended under clause 5. (Only one RCA member can be identified as suspended under clause 5)(136). The benefits paid by the Association to those not yet reinstated was as follows: Section A members, £2 .0 .0 per week; Section B members £1 .10 .0 per week; Section C members, £1 .0 .0 per week. There was also an allowance of 5/- for each dependant child to a maximum of four children.

The Association was pessimistic about the chances of early reinstatements. Because of the shortage of coal the Ministry of Transport had already ordered the railway companies to reduce their services by ten per cent, and it was reported on 26 May that there was to be a further reduction of another twenty per cent(137). On 2 June a short-time working agreement for clerks and supervisors was obtained, which also provided for attempts to find three days' work a week for ex-strikers who were not suspended. 'Loyal' staff worked full time, ex-strikers who were due for holidays took them, and privilege ticket facilities were restored(138).

This agreement marks the end of the strike as far as the majority of RCA members were concerned. There remained those who were subject to clauses 4 & 5 of the original strike settlement; most were still unemployed and did not know where they would be permanently assigned. Many of them were senior employees with long service and positions of authority. They had established households and had often served on local councils or other representative bodies. Now they were to be moved to a station or office that might be a long way from home and would certainly be at some distance. Demoted, they could expect slights and humiliations from people they had once supervised: loss of esteem appears often to have been more disturbing than loss of income. Their punishment for striking for less than two weeks after years of valuable

service recognised through promotion was disproportionately harsh, but the railway companies had been shocked by the strike. They genuinely felt that running the trains on time needed unrelenting discipline and these employees were the ones who had been supposed to maintain it. It is not surprising that the railway managers over-reacted.

#### The 'Marathon' Negotiations begin

The problems of those members who were under suspension were not cleared up overnight. Their changing relationships with the railway companies turned into a marathon negotiating exercise for the permanent staff of the Association; it was still in progress in 1933.

The Association sent out £120,000 in strike cheques(139). After the strike, more was expended in unemployment pay to members who were not taken back by the railway companies. Special grants were also paid to members who were unemployed for an unusually long time or who had been compulsorily transferred away from their home territory and so incurred abnormal expenses. The Association's total expenditure on the strike in 1926 was £238,922, with a further £13,841 in 1927 (equal to at least £3 million at the present time). At the beginning of 1926, the Association's total funds stood at £310,129, which represented £4 13s. 9d. per member. At the end of 1926, the total funds were £119,833, or £2 3s. 9d. per member(140).

At the 1926 Annual Conference an appeal was made to all members except those not yet reinstated, to make a voluntary contribution of at least £1, spread over twenty weeks. These contributions must have helped the Association to recover from its financial difficulties(141). Walkden told the press that the Association had not needed to sell investments to pay for its involvement in the strike(142). This may

well have been true, but £40,000 was borrowed from the CWS bank, and securities would have to be deposited as collateral(143).

Once the railways' work-sharing agreement had been signed, unemployment amongst ordinary Association members - as distinct from members who had been especially active during the strike or who were supervisors - dropped significantly. On 22 May 5,838 members were reported as not yet reinstated. Four days later - on May 26 - another 483 were also reported, but another 748 reinstatements left a net figure of 5,573(144). A month later - on 25th June, after work-sharing had been agreed - this had been further reduced to approximately two thousand. There were grumbles about the administration of work-sharing and the Association's payment of unemployment pay(145), but it was tacitly recognised that Association had achieved all that could be done for the bulk of the membership for the present. The Association's efforts were now concentrated of the smaller groups who were under particular pressures.

The members with the most urgent needs were those being prosecuted or sued in the courts for their activities during the strike. The prosecutions reported here were not brought by the police, but were initiated by two railway companies: the GWR and the LMS. The GWR charged the local secretaries of the three railway unions (NUR, ASLEF and RCA) with intimidation. The case was heard at Taunton on June 2; the magistrates decided that there was not enough evidence to send the case for trial. At Swindon, a member of the Association's Executive was also prosecuted for intimidation, but the evidence was unconvincing and the character of the defendant made it appear even weaker: he had twenty-three years' railway service, was a Primitive Methodist local preacher and a borough councillor, and had been thanked by the police for helping to maintain order during the strike. His trial was farcical: one witness

who was supposed to have been intimidated was described as twice the defendant's size. At Towcester, two NUR members and a RCA branch collector were prosecuted for intimidation and, again, the evidence was insufficient. A similar outcome ensued at Clitheroe, where a RCA member and four other railway trade unionists faced a charge of intimidation. At Manchester, the chairman of Manchester No.6 branch was awarded forty guineas costs against the LMS, after facing a similar charge(146). No successful prosecutions have been traced.

A civil action was brought against the secretary of the Chesterfield branch by the *Derbyshire Times*, a local newspaper claiming to have been damaged by the branch's activities during the strike. This was a more serious threat to the Association than were the intimidation cases, for an award of damages could have been costly and might have encouraged further claims. In the event, the case dragged on until 1928, when the plaintiffs stopped the case and paid £72 .3s.6d to the defendant for his costs and disbursements(147).

Many of the obvious and immediate problems had been resolved by the end of 1926, although full-time working was not restored until 1927. The reinstatement of most of the ordinary members appears to have been achieved by October 1927(148), but a few members appear never to have been reinstated at all. These were mainly temporary and 'unappointed' clerks(149). In June 1927, there were said to be only a few such members left(150), and at the end of August 1927 it was decided to review the remaining cases(151). Presumably they were advised that, after so long a time, there was little hope of reinstatement. The Association had been paying them unemployment pay for over a year and had also given grants to unemployed members whose circumstances were especially difficult. Up to November 1926, grants totalled nearly £240(152).

The negotiations which eventually led to the end of short-time

working began with a joint meeting of the three railway trade unions held on 19th August 1926. It was called to discuss the way the strike agreements were working and to organise the arguments to be presented to a meeting of the railway general managers. It was hoped that the agenda would include the companies' way of dealing with clause 4 cases, especially the LNER and LMS who were insisting on demoting these workers as well as moving them to different parts of the country(153). Other matters were the retention of volunteers and the way the salaried staff had been organised since the strike. On this last point, the three Executives made a declaration that there should be no interference with salaried grades. They also requested the TUC to ask all other trade unions to make similar declarations. An attempt was made to have a joint meeting with the General Managers, but the reply was they saw no point; each company could settle its own problems separately. Pressure for a joint meeting continued throughout the autumn; by early November, the unions were also pressing for short-time working to be extended from three days a week to four(154). This was despite the fact that the coal lock-out was still in progress. A joint meeting was eventually fixed for 21 December and the general managers were then to be pressed to end short-time working completely(155).

At the joint meeting, the general managers suggested that everybody should work long enough to earn a standard week's wages. This was not satisfactory to the unions, but the general managers were insistent(156). Despite more pressure the next development was the extension of the working week from three to four days on 21 February 1927, and from 1 March it was further extended to five days, including Sundays. It was not until 11 April that the full guaranteed week was restored for 'conciliation' staff and a full working week for clerical staff(157).

The restoration of normal working for those disciplined under



clauses 4 and 5 of the original strike settlement remained to be settled. Negotiations about it had been in train since disciplinary action began; the pressure was now increased to restore the subjects of it to their former status.

On the first day of the General Strike, a director of the Great Western Railway Company called at Kingham, a GWR station in Oxfordshire. His first, and predictable, question was to ask for the station-master, *L.J. Farmer*. On learning that he was on strike, the director declared that the station-master would not be re-employed by the GWR. The station-master's daughter, in anonymous reminiscences(158), says the discomforts her father suffered immediately after the strike were due to this visit. It may have contributed to them, but he would almost certainly have appeared on the clause 4 list, even had the director not gone to Kingham on the crucial day, but the length and idiosyncrasy of the GWR's clause 4 list may owe something to the peregrinations of this company director(159). The daughter reports that the Association fought her father's case and that at one point he was interviewed by his General Manager. It was decided that he should not go back to Kingham, but would be appointed to the next station in his grade to fall vacant. Until then, he would be found work somewhere in his Division (the Worcester Division). In August he was sent to Pershore to help with the plum traffic, working as a fifth-grade clerk (this is the lowest grade of clerk). In late autumn, he was appointed as station-master at Droitwich. Up to 8 November, he was rated as having lost approximately £45 as a consequence of his suspension and the Association gave him a grant of £35 to help compensate him(160). He received no further promotion but remained in the same grade until retiring twelve years later. He had been secretary of his Association branch, but after the strike he no longer took an active part in trade

union affairs. He became a Droitwich councillor and later a J.P., eventually being elected Chairman of the Bench.

This case has been described at some length, because although it may not be typical it shows some features which appear in other clause 4 cases. The Kingham station-master appears to have been fairly lucky, as there were still a number of clause 4 cases unresolved in January 1928. Three were GWR employees(161), but the Association considered that the LMS was the worst company for not re-instating clause 4 cases, followed by the LNER(162).

The statement that pressure to restore the clause 4 and 5 workers to their former status increased once the guaranteed week was restored should perhaps be qualified. It accords with the Association's records, but the impression that they give may be to some extent be distorted because of the concentration of attention on those workers in the Association's proceedings, after earlier post-strike problems were settled. As far as the majority of them are concerned, either they or the Association had decided by the beginning of November 1926 that what could be done for them had been done.

On 8 November and 15 December 1926, lists of grants made to members whose cases were not yet settled were published in the Executive Minutes(163). There were 27 names out of 118 which had been on the original lists (117 clause 4 and one clause 5)(164). The twenty-seven names may not have included all the unsettled cases, but must have covered most of them. Most who suffered suspension would have needed financial help, even though the original agreement specified no loss of earnings, because of their removal from one part of the country to another. Up to the 8th November, £460 . 11s. 6d. was paid to them in special grants. A further £92 . 15s. 0d. was paid before the end of 1926. This was some compensation for losses totalling £917.0. 0d. that they

were estimated to have incurred(165).

There were differences in the companies' ways of handling clause 4 and 5 cases. When the post-strike period began, the GWR looked like presenting the Association with most difficulty. Their 'clause 4' list was the longest and it included grades which no other company listed(166). In July 1926, they were withholding normal scale increases for workers who had been out on strike. The Association referred this action to the Central Wages Board(167). In April 1927 it was discovered that the company was discriminating another way. Women clerks on the GWR customarily received a company 'dowry' on marriage (when, compulsorily, their employment ceased), and it was discovered that they were not being given to women who had been on strike(168). But in February 1927 it emerged that the GWR had begun to pay the scale increase to strikers. This appeared to be a direct result of the Association's complaint to the Central Wages Board; it had now reached the National Wages Board, but was withdrawn as a result of the company's action(169). In October 1927, it was reported that the company had stopped withholding dowries, apparently because of negotiating pressure(170). The pressure also appears to have modified the company's attitude on 'clause 4', because most of its list was cleared by the end of 1926; the Kingham station-master was re-instated at Droitwich in the late autumn of that year. The Southern Railway disciplined only three workers, but it strongly resisted efforts to modify its attitude to them. The LNER also provided stern resistance, but the most stubborn company of all was the LMS, although their list of thirty-two was comparatively short. Its distinguishing feature was the only 'clause 5' case: an inspector at Dalston Junction in North London(171).

Disciplined members were mostly employed on the four main-line railways but two employees of two other companies were also involved in

the 'negotiating marathon'. One was a clerk who worked for the Metropolitan Railway Company, which refused to take him back after the strike(172). The other member worked for the London General Omnibus Company. This was part of T.O.T. (Trams, Omnibuses and Tubes) combine and Lord Ashfield, its managing director, did not discipline any of his railway employees(173), but this clerk was employed by a bus company and was demoted from class III to class IV. He was given a special grant and the Association negotiated his restoration to his former rank; he was said to have been selected as an example(174). It took about fifteen months to achieve the re-instatement in August 1927, and the pressure involved blocking a Parliamentary Bill(175). The clerk was paid a final, special grant of £5(176).

This case gives some idea of the dimensions of the task of negotiating solutions to the problems created by the 'clause 4 and 5' lists. By June 1927 there were few cases left, but these were very intractable(177). When the LGOC clerk was restored to his old rank, eight other members were paid special grants (totalling £136) and there were at least three others for whom the Association was still negotiating(178).

As already explained, the LMS company was the most intractable. Early in 1927, in connection with its normal business, the company promoted a Bill in Parliament: the 'LMS General Powers Bill'. This was blocked by the Association's M.P.s(179). Their action had a remedial effect; by the middle of February the LMS management had discussed all their 'clause 4 and 5' cases and some improvements had already been effected(180).

In November 1927, the railway companies approached the Association for help in promoting a Railways and Road Traffic Bill. This would allow the railways to engage in road transport operations and was an

attempt to ensure that the loss of traffic caused by road competition would not mean too large a loss of revenue for the railway companies. The Association's first response was to secure a promise that any operations made possible, if the Bill became law, would not lead to a loss of jobs. They then said that co-operation could not be guaranteed unless all the outstanding 'clause 4 and 5' cases were cleared by the end of the year; they also hoped that the other two railway trade unions would co-operate in ensuring the resolution of these cases(181). In December 1927 the other two unions added their pressure to the efforts to have the remaining cases resolved(182).

Soon after this, one of the more notable of the outstanding cases was cleared up. A.W. Longbottom had been removed from his job as a canvasser and collector in Halifax to another job in Huddersfield, under clause 4. On 1 January 1928 he regained his former job. A Labour Party activist of long standing in Halifax, he had been on the borough council since 1912 and was its Mayor in 1923. In July 1928 he was elected at a by-election as the M.P. for Halifax(183).

By November 1928, very little movement was reported on the cases still outstanding(184). One of the three members disciplined by the Southern had retired; the other two cases remained unresolved(185). The three railway unions were pressing the railway companies for a joint meeting to attempt to settle them, but the companies were reluctant. All the railway companies were promoting Bills in Parliament in 1928, and in January 1929 the two Association M.P.s were asked to put down blocking motions against all but the Metropolitan Railway Bill(186). This was despite the opposition of J.H. Thomas of the NUR, who did not consider blocking Bills to be a reasonable way of dealing with the cases at issue; he thought they should be dealt with by arbitration on the lines recommended in the victimisation section of the Mond-Turner Industrial

Conference report (187). By March, the effects of the blocking were evident; the railway companies were prepared for a joint meeting (188).

None transpired, but the pace of re-instatement quickened. By April 1929, the single 'clause 5' case had been settled, but the subject of it had to move from Dalston to Stoke-on-Trent. Jobs were being offered to others; some were being accepted and some members bargained (189). At the end of April, the Southern Railway was declared clear (190). There was a trickle of re-instatement all through 1929 and most of 1930. The penultimate case left was that of a member of the Executive who accepted a job similar to the one he had lost. He took it up on 1 January 1931, at Bolton, having formerly worked at Warrington (191).

The replacing of their own colleague back in a job comparable to his old one and not too far distant from it was the virtual end of the Executive's long and gruelling feat of negotiation. Most of the displaced members were reinstated, but it is not possible to determine how many were not. Only one member is mentioned in the E.C. minutes as not having been reinstated, but he seems to have been at some danger of dismissal before the strike (192). Even with this difficult case the Association demonstrated considerable patience, keeping up negotiations over a period of years.

#### Dealing with other Post-Strike difficulties

Other successful achievements of the post-strike period included the way the Association held in check its post-strike membership decline and its success, when the Trades Disputes Act became law, in persuading a large majority of the membership to 'contract-in'.

The decline in trade union membership after 1926 is a well

documented(193), and a number of reasons have been offered in explanation. The main one is the manner in which the strike was called: in effect, the General Council of the TUC told the trade unions to, 'sink the differences you have amongst yourselves and leave the direction of the fight to us'. When it was called off, without proper safeguards having been made for the return to work, there must have been a sense of betrayal amongst trade unionists, and a strong feeling that they had been used and thrown aside. This feeling was probably less current amongst railway trade unionists, although it did exist(194). The unions had held out for a more reasonable strike settlement and the Association added to this a fierce fight to re-instate the comparative few whom the trade unions could not immediately protect when the strike ended.

Sensible management of industrial relations was not all that kept the drop in membership in check. A special Organisation and Propaganda Campaign was started in July 1927, when it was apparent that there was a real problem of falling membership. Short-time working had finished three months earlier, so it was reasonable to expect members to clear their arrears and for recruitment of new and lapsed members to start getting easier. When the campaign was launched there were said to be 15,131 members with arrears amounting to £6,849; and 3,326 members were said to have been lost since the strike(195). After its peak of 87,054 in 1920, the Association's membership had fallen to 51,137 in 1922, but rose thereafter to 66,130 in 1925. The strike brought it down through 54,795 in 1926 to 50,208 in 1927. Increases to 52,227 in 1928, 54,347 in 1929, and 59,473 in 1930, may not be solely attributed to the campaign, but it seems likely to have been largely responsible(196).

Originally, the campaign was meant to last for six months, and it was not meant to be national. However, experience demonstrated that more was needed, and it was decided that activity would be concentrated on one

region at a time. A propaganda booklet was published: *The RCA and its Path of Progress*(197). The campaign had hardly begun when a new factor appeared: the Trades Disputes Act, 1927. This was the Government's legislative response to the General Strike. Its provisions fell under four headings: three of them deal with sympathetic strikes, intimidation, and membership of trade unions by civil servants, but the provision which affected the Association's recruiting campaign was that union members now had to provide written agreement that they wanted to pay a political levy. In other words, they now needed to 'contract-in', whereas formerly they had to 'contract-out,' by signing a declaration if they did not want to pay a political levy(198). The Executive's response was to incorporate a contracting-in aspect to the recruiting campaign(199). As has been shown, the decline in membership was reversed; and the contracting-in campaign also succeeded. In May 1928 the Association's national average for contracting-in was 80.9 per cent(200).

### Conclusions

The General Strike was a shattering experience for the trade union movement. The probable intention had been to provide such a convincing demonstration of industrial power that the Government would force the coal-owners to reorganise the industry in a rational manner and to negotiate a satisfactory national agreement on miners' pay and conditions. If this was the intention - it appears to be the only rational one - then the General Strike was a failure. The success of Red Friday may have misled the trade union leaders as to the Government's view of them, and to over-estimate their own potency. The TUC made no formal, practical preparations for the strike, and independent organisation was very patchy(201). In the event, improvisation and local



organisation were impressive. All the same, and despite the demonstration of remarkable solidarity, the Government had not quickly succumbed and the strike was turning into a conflict of attrition by the time it was called off. When it entered such a phase, the TUC leaders seem to have become alarmed that they might have provoked a political adventure that they did not intend and could not control.

A coal embargo enforced by the railway and transport unions would have been much more feasible. It was what was originally proposed before Red Friday, and it was the fear of this that led the Government to climb down(202). It was what the miners asked for again, soon after the strike on 21 May 1926, repeating their request through a special TUC six months later(203). But the railway unions were in disarray after the strike; prominent members were either suspended or had been sent to areas where they were not known and had established no influence. More limited than a general strike, a coal embargo could have been applied as a fairly long-term weapon of attrition; there is support for this interpretation from at least one authority(204).

The General Strike had a profound influence on the Association. Although it had sought and received a strike mandate in 1919, May 1926 was the first occasion on which it attempted to bring out its whole membership. The experience must have been very disturbing for the Executive, especially as some of them were disciplined under clause four and at least one was arraigned in court.

The strike had at least two positive effects on the Association, although the cost was high. The first was in the experience of industrial organisation at a time of dispute and of negotiation afterwards - valuable for the negotiations on pay that continued through the 1930s, and for the aftermath of a railway strike in Northern Ireland soon after the General Strike. The second, and perhaps the more

significant, was the development of a cooperative relationship with the other railway unions; this was part of the post-strike negotiating experience referred to above. The two 'conciliation staff' unions temporarily forgot their differences, and they could now regard the Association in genuine comradeship with them.

Both benefits were part of the greater maturity which the strike forced on the Association, and affected the union as a whole; the Strike's immediately disadvantageous effects fell largely on individual members, although its drain on resources laid general constraints on the Association. It was 1932 before its funds reached their pre-strike level (205), and the Association had to wait till 1940 for its membership to pass the 1925 figure (206).

It has already been suggested that the workers who were disciplined were probably the more active and influential members of the Association. The evidence for this is not extensive, because little is known about them as individuals, but what there is suggests that they were prominent members, some of whose trade union activity subsided after the Strike. The station-master from Kingham, " ... took no more active part in union affairs, but he continued to work in the public affairs of the town" (207). The career aspirations of ambitious members of the Association who had been strikers stood to be hindered if not completely blocked; even when there was no discrimination, suspicions of it could lead to long-standing grievances. Private information suggests that they were manifest amongst railway white-collar workers in the 1950s and 1960s (208); a twenty-year-old striker in 1926 would still be at work until 1971. In July 1927 the Executive decided to investigate a case of a non-striker's allegedly unfair promotion to a position of station-master; he was employed by the LMS. (209) In August 1927 it was reported that the T.O.T. (Trams, Omnibuses and Tubes) Consortium had

declared an embargo on promotion for 1926 strikers(210); and the following year, the LMS was reportedly discriminating against Association members who wanted promotion. There were similar accounts from Manchester and South Wales(211), and the companies' records show that discrimination was possible. A file of reports and letters originally held in an office in Darlington, on the LNER, and now in the Public Record Office, has a letter detailing how workers' activities during the strike were to be entered on their staff records(212). Records for the GWR note that 'loyal' staffs' histories were to be suitably annotated(213).

It should be acknowledged that the majority of Association members would never have been promoted; there were not enough senior jobs. But those who were singled out to be disciplined precisely because of their senior grades had already achieved some recognition of merit, indicating that they might have expected further promotion; some frustrated hopes could have been realistic. For the rest, although the chances of promotion were unlikely, there would be a more generalised disappointment. Anyone who had been on strike and did not achieve advancement might attribute his failure, at least in part, to his share in the strike; there was no way of knowing whether it had any effect or not.

It has been suggested earlier in this chapter that there is an especial value in an account of a white-collar union's experience of the General Strike. The Association's members' beliefs about discriminatory treatment, real or imaginary, indicate something of the justification for the claim. Until after the first World War, the Association's policy had been against striking; a predictable stance for office workers with occupational reasons for identifying some of their interests as in common with those of their managements. At first sight, the change of policy

and the Association's participation in the General Strike may be seen as a remarkable change of attitude. They certainly invite analysis, but are less dramatic than they seem, and can be presented as entirely in keeping with the attitudes that are here suggested as likely to be typical of white-collar workers.

There is no mystery about the Association's early participation in the General Strike; as a transport union it was in the first wave of the TUC's strike plan(214). The Association's leaders' early perception of conditions likely to precipitate industrial action, their promotion of a strike fund in advance of the consensus of the need for one, and the extent of members' support when the call eventually came, can all be explained in terms of stereotypically petit-bourgeois tenets of prudence and moderation applied in the circumstances of the time. They were no aberrations, but were part of a consistent industrial strategy.

The special interest of the episode is in what the Association learnt from it, and what lessons it had for white-collar unions in general. Reference has been made to the relationship between non-militancy and white-collar workers' presumed alignment with employers rather than with manual workers. Non-militancy might be ascribed to loyalty to employers, middle-class morality, or false consciousness; but it can also be seen as the the rational consequence of working in organisations offering career structures. It was in direct conflict with the industrial strategy that was an equally rational response to the circumstances in which railway clerks found themselves after 1918, and the aftermath of the General Strike was a starkly salutary demonstration of the special problems that industrial action presents for white-collar workers.

Railway clerks' hopes and expectations of advancement lay in expertise that singled them out not only as candidates for promotion but

as vulnerable to victimization; reluctance to take industrial action was related to the sense of what members stood to lose, including career prospects. It is immaterial that the chances of any particular person's promotion may have been slight. Manual work was not without its parallels but, in general, the balance of factors in the calculus of militancy was likely to be significantly different, and the competitive aspects of career development placed the ambitious aspirant for supervisory or managerial status at especial risk of paying a high individual price for identifying with the collective. On the other hand, the specialized expertise that made some of the Association's members particularly vulnerable to discriminatory practices was a bargaining counter when the return to work was negotiated; fair dealing was at the forefront of the Association's concern at that stage and its expenditure of time and money in the interests of those who remained unprotected was ungrudging. But this does not mean that members' interests were safeguarded to the full satisfaction of all, and those who continued to discern the strike's damaging effects three decades after it happened may well have thought them to be beyond the control of their or any union.

The General Strike presented the Association with nothing that was not theoretically accepted in its ordinary pursuit of industrial relations. Its members' propensity to strike, or not, was related to their assessment of what was to be gained or lost; negotiating strengths rested on the extent of organisation within particular monopolies of skills. But, in 1926, theory was put to practical test, not only with a white-collar union but one which was well-established, recognized, and relatively well-placed to support its members through the action and its consequences.

## Chapter 6

### How The Association Dealt with Dissension

#### Introduction

It may seem strange to consider dissension as something contributing to the Association's success. Strange, because dissidents were not allowed to flourish 'like a hundred flowers' to enliven the stolid whole, but were cut back as soon as the Executive could think of a way of doing it. So this discussion might be expected explain how the union's solidarity was diminished by the Executive's attitude rather than the opposite. But it is here argued that solidarity was manifest in the application of discipline, admittedly not at the instigation of the membership at large but with full support from representatives at delegate conferences who invariably confirmed their Executive's actions.

'Discipline' should be seen in its context. Although the Association took part in the General Strike, was affiliated to the T. U. C. and took a full part in Labour Party affairs, its representation of white-collar interests meant that it was not always at one with other trade unions(1). It had a long history of hostility to left-wing activity beyond official Labour Party policy. This principle was once specifically stated, not surprisingly during 1919 when industrial militancy was at its most intense(2). The Executive's reply to a branch's request for strike action was that it was not Labour Party policy, then neither was it RCA policy(3).

The first instance of dissidence to be described here was perceived by the Executive as one where some members breached an important principle out of frustration. Because they were seen as isolated, their

behaviour was not regarded as part of organised left-wing dissent and there was an amicable settlement, even though the Association's permanent officials were severely provoked. The other two instances were identified as part of organized left-wing policy and dealt with more harshly.

One aspect of the Association's treatment of left-wing dissidents is that the 'bell, book and candle' episodes - or so they appear, as discussed in a Communist workplace journal, of which more later - were associated with A.G. Walkden's term as General Secretary(4). This does not mean that he decided the policy, but he certainly orchestrated it.

The first case, although the episode was trivial and was treated as such by the officials, did involve an important aspect of political practice and was therefore considered at some length by the Executive Committee. The point of principle was the doctrine that the Association should always present a united front in pursuing its relationships with other bodies. The other two cases, to do with workers' education and with the Communist element in the Association, had national and even international dimensions. According to G.D.H. Cole, there was conflict between the Labour College movement and the Workers Education Association in every large town and union in the country (5), so the tale of the Association's part in this battle should be told. One factor was that the Labour College Movement had no funds other than those the Labour Movement could provide, but the WEA was allowed some public money (6), so the Labour College Movement may have seemed more pugnacious, because its need was greater. The Minority Movement was the name under which the Communist Party of Great Britain attempted to influence the trade union movement in the 1920s and early 1930s, and the Association's engagement with it provides another episode worth analysing. The three instances,

taken together, illustrate certain characteristics that typify the Association as it matured and consolidated its position between the wars.

Sectional Councillor: A job for life?

Eastleigh No.1 was the largest RCA branch in one sectional council's electoral area. The area can be described as the railway stations and depots in the rough triangle between Basingstoke, Salisbury and Southampton (7). A sectional council consists of representatives elected by the staff and members nominated by the employers. Candidates for the important positions of staff representatives were selected by a committee drawn from all the RCA branches in the area. Eastleigh No.1 was the largest branch, because the main South Western Railway's works had been built there in 1909 (8). The RCA-supported candidate, chosen by the area committee, was a member of Eastleigh No.1 branch, but over the years he had lost the confidence of its membership and a rival candidate was selected by the branch in January 1929. In the election the rebel Eastleigh No.1 candidate was defeated, getting 403 votes against the 'official' Association candidate's 586 (9).

The success of the 'official' Association candidate did not pacify the Executive Committee. From the beginning, they had acted to try to ensure that there would only be one candidate sponsored by the Association and that he should be the one to whom Eastleigh No.1 objected, but who had been approved by a majority at a selection conference. There was, however, no constitutional reason why other candidates should not stand with branch support, and Eastleigh No.1's



feelings were strong enough for them to go against the Executive's expectations of solidarity and put up their preferred candidate. Eastleigh No. 1 was a large and important branch and its actions had thrown into disorder the pre-election arrangements and inter-branch relationships in an area that should have been 'safe' as a sectional council seat for the Association. When the branch's disaffection was first manifest, the Divisional Secretary for the area had been sent to address a branch meeting in an attempt to persuade branch members that what they wanted to achieve by way of changes of representation was neither sensible nor possible. The branch saw the sectional councillor as weak and vacillating; the Divisional Secretary said that he was as effective as could be expected(10). On this perception, the rebels seem to have thought that recognition placed the union in a much stronger position vis-a-vis the railway companies than was the case - rather as if a modern Daily Mail reader were to take his newspaper's anti-union propaganda at face value and not understand why his own union failed to impose its will on his employer.

However, the Divisional Secretary's intervention provoked a complaint to the Executive Committee that he was hostile to the branch. His counter-claim was that he had been received rudely, and the breakdown of relations became a matter for the Executive Committee's sub-committee on staff to consider, as the Divisional Secretary was a paid official. The complaint had been preceded by a formal branch resolution censuring the Divisional Secretary; in the circumstances the Executive had to initiate formal procedures to assess the validity of the resolution with a view to expunging it should it be judged unfair; consequently the branch's affairs were scrutinised by an Assistant Secretary. At this point, by which time the election was over, the branch officers were invited to meet members of the Executive Committee in London; the meeting

was successfully conciliatory. Subsequently, the Executive Committee circulated all branches in an attempt to ensure that, in future elections, no more than one Association candidate would stand and that there would be no repetition of disturbances like the one they had just experienced (11).

This incident has been detailed at some length because it shows how the Executive Committee responded when left-wing politics were not involved in a dispute with a branch. The Association (and this does not simply mean the Executive Committee) were generally hostile to left-wing ideas, as was demonstrated by the large majorities by which left-wing proposals were usually rejected at annual conferences.

#### NCLC v. WEA: Conflict over workers' education

An example of the hostility to left-wing ideas is the manner in which the Association dealt with its relationships with the Central Labour College and the larger body into which it became absorbed: the National Council of Labour Colleges. Like the Workers' Educational Association, it offered educational facilities to trade unions, but it was the more left-wing of the two. Its curriculum was based on Marxism, but it was not a Communist organisation. From time to time, attempts were made by Communists to infiltrate it, but usually they were rebuffed(12); its form of Marxism predated the foundation of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB). It was supported by the South Wales Miners' Federation and by the NUR(13). In the surge of left-wing feeling characteristic of the years following each of the large-scale wars of this century(14), the Association's annual conference in 1920 resolved that a scholarship should be offered by the RCA for a member to attend the Central Labour College. The resolution had originated in the

Richmond Branch's motion that the Association should take up a scholarship at Ruskin College. Newport Branch succeeding in amending it to substitute 'Central Labour' for 'Ruskin', thus altering the motion from an appeal for support for WEA type of education to the more left-wing type. The Executive's subsequent memorandum on the feasibility of such a scholarship implies that members were misled into voting for the proposal(15), in that they were not fully aware of its ideological connotations. The Executive may have suspected a South Welsh conspiracy because a sponsor of the Central Labour College was, as has already been noted, the South Wales Miners Federation. Ideas about a conspiracy would be reinforced when, after the new year had come and gone and the Executive had not only failed to implement the resolution, but had reappointed a representative to the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), Pontypridd Branch wrote asking why nothing had been done about the resolution, and was not satisfied with the response. After more correspondence, all the branch officers resigned and the branch ceased to function. Pressure was put on the branch officers to reactivate the branch, but it was only after a special meeting of the South Wales Council voted almost unanimously in protest against the Executive's failure to organise the provision of a scholarship at the Central Labour College that the branch resumed its normal activity (16).

In March 1921, the Executive learned that a Trade Union Enquiry Committee was looking into the various forms of working-class adult education such as Ruskin College, the Labour Colleges and the Workers Educational Association. A main consideration would be how the trade unions could best use their meagre educational resources. The existence of this committee, together with an estimate that support for a scholarship at the Central Labour College would mean a commitment of £500 per annum, led to the withdrawal of a motion critical of the

Executive's educational policy, even though its sponsors were Newport No. 1, Pontypridd, and Derby No. 1 (17). This action becomes more understandable in the context of the financial information. The Association never recovered from the costs incurred at the end of the war; the subscription had been doubled at the beginning of 1921 and the increase was already leading to a loss of members (18). A resolution entailing heavy expenses could not expect much support from any but its most ardent proponents at the 1921 Annual Conference.

As might be expected, the Committee of Enquiry recommended that all the various educational bodies should be utilised. This gave no help to either side in the dispute. Those in authority in the RCA would probably have denied that there was a two-sided dispute, but quite soon they showed that they did not think the demands of the more left-wing members were sensible for the Association as a whole, and were determined that what they thought sensible would be what the Association would get (19). This was to be education after the fashion of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) rather than that of the Labour College. The difference between the two types is that the WEA style was in accord with established cultural values, whereas Labour College education attempted to turn out class warriors equipped to change society through their understanding of its socio-economic dynamics (20).

At a time of high unemployment and ineffective government the Labour College movement had spread and, in October 1921, the various separate bodies - the Central Labour College in London, the Scottish Labour College and the mainly part-time local colleges scattered over the country - set up a central body to co-ordinate their efforts. This was known as the National Council of Labour Colleges (21).

Despite the setting-up of this body and the enthusiasm for the Labour College's type of education displayed by many members, especially

those from the more economically depressed areas, the Executive decided to press the 1922 Annual Conference to decide that the Association should join the Workers' Educational Trade Union Committee (WETUC). This was not, as its name might suggest, a sub-committee of the TUC. It was an educational body originally sponsored by the Iron and Steel Confederation. Later, it also attracted the support of the Post Office Workers and the Association of Engineering and Shipbuilding Draughtsmen. The AESD appears to have had close links with the Association; later in the 1920s they concluded a joint membership agreement under which draughtsmen who transferred to railway drawing offices could automatically take up membership of the Association. The two unions were also involved in the establishment of the National Federation of Professional Workers. This helps to explain why the RCA, although a railway trade union, preferred to make use of the WETUC even though the Central Labour College was supported by the NUR, the largest railway union. But the underlying reason is likely to be that unions for draughtsmen, clerks and supervisors, reflecting the general attitudes of their members, were likely to be hostile to the Marxist ideas that informed the Labour Colleges' concept of social science, whilst industrially organised unions catering for manual workers seem to have been much less hostile. This contrast in attitudes meant that the split amongst Association members on the issue of fusion with the NUR was partly along ideological lines. (There were, of course, other influences affecting this issue).

At the 1922 conference, the Executive Committee had its way and the RCA joined the WETUC scheme. The changeover from the Labour College scheme was not achieved without opposition and the General Secretary, as part of the process of stifling it, reiterated a pledge which had been made at the 1921 Annual Conference, i. e. "that the E. C. would take

further action after the question of the Ruskin and Labour Colleges had been decided at the forthcoming Trades Union Congress" (22). This pledge appears to have been enough to have persuaded the proposer of the main opposing amendment to withdraw it. The amendment had been forwarded by Bradford No. 1 branch, from which, as will be seen later, there emerged a leading member of the Association's Communist 'Minority Movement'.

The impression that appears to have been left with many of the proponents of the NCLC scheme was that the WETUC would act as an umbrella organisation such that Association members would be able to take any available form of workers' education under its auspices. The more perceptive of the left-wing members realised that this was not likely and pressed the Executive Committee and the officers on any flank where they seemed weak. The General Secretary had recently failed to capture the Woverhampton West Parliamentary seat at a by-election. Walkden had nursed this seat since 1913, and had visibly spent RCA money on his campaigns: he had fought a number of elections there and had always been unsuccessful (23). On this issue the Executive were weak, and were enthusiastically attacked.

At the 1923 Conference there was not time to discuss a resolution saying that a scholarship should be provided at the Central Labour College (24), so it was amongst those left over to be dealt with by the Executive, who presented a report to the 1924 Annual Conference, and once more stressed the cost of £500 per student per annum. The report also said that, having finished a Central Labour College course, a student would be unemployable. These arguments were enough to persuade the 1924 Annual Conference to rescind the conference decision on the provision of scholarships at the Central Labour College.

But the issue did not die. Even before the annual conference that year, there was some correspondence between the secretary of the NCLC and

the General Secretary of the Association, making it clear that the NCLC would only accept students direct from a union and not through the WETUC. The WETUC was charged with being the WEA under another name; the WETUC denied this, although admitting that their secretariat were also WEA officials(25). There were at least four resolutions calling for inclusion in the NCLC scheme at the 1925 Annual Conference, but all failed (26).

Matters stayed like this for a number of years; pro-NCLC resolutions would appear on the Annual Conference Agenda, but would be defeated. By 1929, the two unions which supported the Central Labour College were finding the task very onerous. They tried to persuade the TUC to support the college, but this could not be agreed so, in 1929, the Central Labour College was forced to close down. The NCLC continued to provide correspondence courses, day and weekend schools, part-time classes and summer schools, but there was no longer a residential college (27). This removed the basis of the Executive Committee and Officers' objections to the NCLC. It was also, according to one commentator, less Marxist-orientated by this time (28), but it was not until the Annual Conference of 1935 that a motion was passed saying that the Association should make use of the NCLC educational facilities (29).

This time there was much less difficulty in its implementation. A number of factors may have been responsible for this: most generally, there was a groundswell of sympathy for left-wing ideals in the Labour Movement during the 1930's which affected the Association's rank and file. Also, Walkden, the politically moderate General Secretary, who had been in office since 1906, was soon to retire and he may have not opposed affiliation to the NCLC as strongly as he did formerly. The Association eventually came to an agreement with the NCLC and began sending students to their classes on the 1st January 1936 (30).

## The Association and its Minority Movement

Marxist ideas or any others that fundamentally questioned society's economic basis appear not to have appealed to the general membership of the Association. In the early 1920s, they might have voted for scholarships at the Central Labour College without realising that the basis of its teaching was Marxist. Also, the very early 1920's were comparatively optimistic years; in 1920 many of the delegates at the Annual Conference had not long returned to civilian life and were likely to be open to new ideas. The late 1920's were a very different matter. The big divide was the General Strike of 1926 and, especially, its aftermath. The railway companies dealt very harshly with RCA members who had been on strike. Delegates at annual conferences now would be licking their wounds and keeping their heads down. There would be little sympathy for the few who urged the Association to adopt a more militant posture. In 1930, it was still paying money to members who were either still laid off work after the strike or who were in work which paid less than the positions they had occupied prior to the strike(31). As explained in Chapter 5, strikers who were especially hounded by the railway companies tended to be men in the more responsible jobs.

Prominent individual members suffered especial attention, but the bulk of members had their own worries. The way the strike was ended must have left a nasty taste in their mouths; they had to endure a period of short time working, and strikers were worried that their careers had suffered by their action(32). The word 'career' encapsulates one aspect of white collar union membership which is not usually a factor for the members of blue collar unions. It is likely that clerical workers have open to them a promotion hierarchy or 'career structure' leading to management grading and, if they aspire to rise by way of promotion, they



may identify with management(33). Railway clerks in the 1920s probably did not welcome being told that their ambitious behaviour was an expression of false consciousness. Marxist theory ~~presupposes~~ the existence of two classes, which are in a state of constant hostility: the bourgeois or ruling class, and the workers. On this theory, any attempt by a worker to identify with the ruling class is an example of false consciousness, that is, a failure to recognise and act in accordance with workers' true class interests. A white-collar worker who understands the theory might well contrast it unfavourably with the liberal or pluralist ethic likely to have informed his upbringing. According to this, ambitious behaviour would be approbated as a praiseworthy effort to improve one's lot through one's own hard work. It is understandable that most railway clerks were likely to embrace the liberal ideology and that only a minority would turn to Marxism. This was even true over the period of the 1920s and 1930s because, although many people were unemployed, few were railway clerks, for whom there were some prospects of promotion(34).

Over this period, railway clerks' favourable status was officially acknowledged. Their exemption from the contributory health insurance scheme introduced by the National Insurance Act of 1911 has been explained in Chapter 4, and they were excluded from its provision for unemployment. They continued to be covered by the arrangements made in subsequent legislation for employers to obtain exclusion certificates exempting their workers from requirements to pay unemployment insurance; it was the Association's policy to press the railway companies always to seek exclusion as they foresaw no contingencies against which their members needed insurance(35). All the same, there were some railway clerks who did not appear to have much hope of promotion and some who feared unemployment. In London, the most obvious group in this category

were the clerks employed by the Railway Clearing House (36). Before the first World War, when there were over one hundred railway companies, the Clearing House's work was exacting, and without widespread use of calculating machines, involved a large number of clerks. From the first World War onwards the volume of their work declined. The wartime establishment of the common wagon pool reduced the complexity of their work. Also, at the end of the war, most of the railway companies merged into four large main-line companies. This, together with the increased use of office machinery, further decreased the workload (37). As the work declined and became more simplified, promotion dried up and there was stagnation and even some fear of redundancy. These circumstances are likely to have promoted attitudes in Clearing House clerks that were not typical of the generality of RCA members.

In January, 1924, it was learned that a Post Office employee had obtained a successful judgement in the House of Lords regarding the payment of war allowances whilst he was in the armed forces. A Clearing House committee, 'Druce and others', was formed to support one of their number who thought he had a similar claim; there might have been others. The Executive Committee of the Association decided to help the committee, even though the Association's solicitor - W. R. Southeard - was doubtful of the claim's chances of success. The Executive gave £400 to help with the cost of the action, estimated to cost between £750 and £1,000 in total (38). This was soon found to be inadequate. At the first hearing, early in 1925, judgement was given against the Clearing House committee and costs estimated at £2,500 were awarded against it; the committee appealed (39). In May 1925, it was reported that the Appeal Court had reversed the previous judgement against Druce and others. The railway companies (the Clearing House was governed by a committee of railway company managers) were likely to take the case to the House of Lords.

The Association's Executive decided to support Druce and others, and to examine the position of other members of the Association in the light of the Appeal Court's decision (40). On 25 June 1926 it was reported that the House of Lords had decided against the Clearing House clerk's claim. This must have been a heavy blow to many railway clerks, but especially to those working at the Clearing House. Had the Appeal Court's decision been upheld, the railway managers would have had to pay out a large amount of money to ex-service clerks, and the matter was important enough to the managers to be one of the few actions of the Association which was mentioned in minutes of the major committees of the railway companies(41). The severity of the blow must have been exacerbated because the final judgement came just when it was becoming apparent how harsh was the settlement that the railway companies were hoping to impose on their workers after the General Strike.

Given this background, it is not surprising that, in September 1928, the Clearing House was one location about which the Association's Executive became concerned on the grounds of Communist activity. An explanation of the Association's dealings with its members who were active, proselytising Communists needs to be preceded by an outline of the Communist Party's industrial policy.

The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) was founded in 1920-21 (42). Unlike other political parties it set out from its beginnings to have a tight, disciplined membership. Almost inevitably this meant a small one, which never rose above 10,000 until 1936. For most of the 1920s it was between 2000 and 4000 (43). The tactics dictated for such a small membership were the permeation of existing political bodies. For the purposes of this account, the important aspect of this policy is the permeation of trade unions, but one other aspect is also relevant and needs to be mentioned. From 1925, a body called the National Left Wing

had as one of its objects the re-entry of members of the CPGB as members of the Labour Party(44). A weekly newspaper was set up in connection with this campaign: this was the *Sunday Worker*(45).

These two entities, along with the National Minority Movement, which co-ordinated permeation of the trade unions, were all under Communist control although ostensibly independent(46). Throughout its history, the British trade union movement has been subject to all manner of attempts by employers and other opponents to infiltrate, divide and subvert it. The movement's reaction has been to place a high premium on solidarity. In other countries such as France it has been possible for a separate Communist trade union movement to be established. This was not overtly attempted in Britain; instead, the group of Communist Party members in each trade union formed itself into a separate minority fraction. The National Minority Movement was established to co-ordinate their activities (47).

Up to late in 1928, the CPGB modified its revolutionary attitude when dealing with other bodies representative of workers' interests so that it could support them even whilst making it plain that ameliorative action was a waste of time, and that only a workers' revolution would put all matters right. In practice, this meant that Communist activists had to hold to two separate sets of principles as they attempted to politicise the working class (48).

In 1928, this was changed. Stalin had gained sufficient control over the Soviet Union to enforce his 'new line' on the Communist International. The 'new line' was described as 'class against class' i. e., the Labour Party had cast its lot with the capitalist class, but the Communist Party stood for the working class. Parties of the capitalist class were to be stigmatised and opposed, and this included trade unions which were affiliated to them (49). This policy can be regarded as a

return to pure revolutionary principles, but it isolated the Communist party from other working-class institutions. This was contrary to the CPGB's previous practice of accommodating to 'Labourism'. Prior to the 'new line', Communist activists were valued by other trade unionists, because despite their other preoccupations their allegiance to working class ideals could not be faulted. The 'new line' changed everything; it led to new trade unions (50), and eventually to the break-up of the Minority Movement. It cut off the CPGB from the main stream of the labour movement for three years. Trade union leaders talked of breakaway unions and of the divisive influence of the CPGB; the Association found allies to back it in the harrying of its Communist members.

The Minority fraction in the Association can have had no illusion about the Association's official attitude to their activities. In August 1926, just before the General Strike, the Executive Committee issued a circular to branches saying that if trade councils to which they belonged had become affiliated to the National Minority Movement, the branches should not secede but should attempt to reverse the decision (51).

This must have been a warning for the Association's Communist members, but no action appears to have been taken against them until 1928. In May of that year, the Communist members of the Railway Clearing House No. 1 branch were told to stop publishing a magazine called *The Jogger*. Its first issue appeared in November 1927, so the attempt to suppress it was fairly prompt (52). There was a long-standing staff magazine for RCH clerks called *The Jigger* - a reference to an implement they used for drilling holes in large stacks of paper - and *The Jogger* appears to have changed a vowel to obtain its name, in riposte.

The magazine consisted of a single sheet folded to make four pages of reading matter, approximately foolscap size. It was reproduced from typing and sold for a penny. The masthead was its name in large letters

and a stylised representation of the view looking north up Seymour Street, now Eversholt Street - the Railway Clearing House used to be situated on the left-hand side. There was also a five-pointed star containing a hammer and sickle and a short rubric: "The Communist Party paper for Clearing House Clerks". It carried some comment on wider issues; for example, the founding of the *Daily Worker*; the Meerut Conspiracy Trial in India; but its main content was Marxist critique of local Clearing House issues and the Association's national policy insofar as it affected the Clearing House (53).

At first, the E.C.'s prohibition appears to have been observed because there was no issue in June nor July, but one appeared in August (54). This may have been a consequence of the acceptance of a 2½ per cent reduction in pay, endorsed by a special delegate conference on 12 August 1928 (55). Stewart Purkis, of the Railway Clearing House No. 1 Branch, was told that he should cease publication and that he should appear before the Executive Committee (56). He did not comply, but the next meeting of the Executive Committee received a letter complaining about the publication of the *Jogger*. This was signed by eighty members of the RCH No. 1 branch (57). Purkis was summoned to meet the Executive Committee at noon on Monday, 22 October 1928. He replied that he would be there at 5.15p.m. together with a Mr. G. Druce, a long-standing RCA member - probably the Druce of 'Druce and others', although this is not established. He would also be accompanied by a shorthand reporter. The Committee replied that they would see him at 12 noon - without a shorthand reporter, but he could bring Druce; and they were also prepared to pay him loss of earnings and other expenses. He further replied that if he could not appear with a shorthand reporter he would not meet them, and was told that if he would not attend a meeting of the Executive they would deal with him under the rules, that is, expel him

out of hand. The Executive Committee decided in November to tell him that if there was no reasonable response from him before their December meeting he would be expelled from the Association under the rules in regard to members responsible for actions which are detrimental to the Association (58).

At the Executive's December meeting, a letter from Purkis, explaining that he was in Moscow, was read out (59). There was a move to expel him summarily, but instead it was decided that he and another Communist member of Bradford No.1 branch, Rowland Hill, should be told that they were not allowed to spend Association money on a meeting of an organisation to which the Association was not affiliated. The two were mentioned on the programme of a National Minority Movement Railway Conference to be held on January 5; and at the January meeting it was decided to tell Messrs. Purkis and Hill not to use 'RCA' after their names when they were on Minority Movement business (60). At the March 1929 meeting, Purkis and the Executive Committee at last met. Purkis would not agree to stop supporting *The Jogger*, so he was expelled under rule 16(a) (61).

The President and General Secretary went to a special meeting of the RCH No.1 Branch held on 12 March 1929. A motion endorsing the Executive Committee's action in expelling Purkis was defeated by 92 votes to 78. Purkis said he was going to appeal to the Annual Conference to reverse his expulsion. (62). The Executive decided to compile a portfolio of letters and documents to support their case at the Annual Conference. Purkis was invited to send a statement of his case to the General Secretary, to be circulated to all the branches of the Association, and was also told he would be allowed reasonable expenses to cover his appeal to Annual Conference (63). He lost his appeal on a card vote; 39,275 against, 3,750 for (64). He was allowed £19 to cover his expenses and

the Union's retirement benefit which he had lost through his expulsion. RCH No.1 Branch voted 28 - 18 regretting his expulsion (65).

The 1929 Annual Conference was held between 6th and 9th May 1929. At the general election held on 30th May, seven Association-sponsored M.P's were elected; another, also elected, was one of a pair of Association members who had been M.Ps before the election and was helped in his campaign by the Association(66). This was a real achievement for the Association, but amongst those elected were the President, the previous President, and the Treasurer. These were honorary appointments, but the General Secretary and the Chief Assistant Secretary, the two most important paid officials of the Association, were also elected, and expensive arrangements had to be made to cover their responsibilities (67). Dissidents soon appreciated that there was scope for criticising those in authority in the Association.

The Secretariat and the Executive may have been elated by the General Election results, but their Minority Movement members soon brought them down to earth. The *Sunday Worker* of July 14th reported that Purkis had sent his £19 to the Meerut defence fund and his action had been approved by RCH No.1 branch. Its Chairman said that the resolution approving Purkis's action had been passed at a small meeting of the branch with only 24 members present, about half voting for the resolution and the rest abstaining(68). On August 23, the secretary of the RCH No.1 branch forwarded an application from Purkis for his expulsion to be revoked; "I am willing - as I state on the application form - to comply with the rules of the RCA. I say this after studying the rules and reaching the conclusion that there is no rule in the RCA rule book which prohibits members from publishing or supporting the publication of such loyal working-class criticism and propaganda as that which appears in *The Jogger*." Purkis was told he would have to stop



associating with the publication of *The Jogger* and the disruptionist policy it advocated before he would be considered for reinstatement (69).

In August 1929, a mimeographed letter headed the 'Railway Clerks' Minority Movement' was forwarded by its recipient to the General Secretary. It was signed by D. A. Wilson as Hon. Sec. of this group; he was also the organising secretary of the Bradford No. 1 RCA branch. Wilson was not expelled from the Association, but he was relieved of his office when he refused to stop his Minority Movement activities (70). Branches were also circulated and told that known Minority Movement members should not be nominated as branch officers (71).

On September 15th there was an attack on Walkden in the *Sunday Worker*: an article by G. W. Chandler of Manchester No. 6 branch, an interesting branch that must have had some fascinating meetings. Another member was the Treasurer of the Association, A. E. Townend, who had also been M. P for Stockport since 1925. In 1923, the branch had attempted to persuade the Association to join the National Guilds Council which, amongst other policies, advocated workers' control of industry (72).

Chandler refused to comply with a request from the Executive Committee that he withdraw his personal attack on the General Secretary in the *Sunday Worker* (73), and was told that unless he gave an assurance that there would be no repetition he would be expelled from the Association. He wrote that he was considering a reply to the Executive's letter (74), and its meeting of December 1929 received a petition from 160 members belonging to nine different branches. The petition protested about the efforts made to stifle Chandler and said that his criticisms were of policies, not personalities (75).

The Executive wrote to Chandler, saying that if he would not give the assurances they wanted by 11 January 1930 he would be expelled from the Association (76). After his expulsion was confirmed, in February

1930, he said he wanted to appeal to the Annual Conference and asked for facilities to circulate a statement around all the branches (77). His statement was a reprint of his *Sunday Worker* article; his appeal failed. (78).

In June 1932, both Chandler and Purkis applied to be re-admitted (79). Purkis had now left the CPGB, having joined it soon after the General Strike (80) and been expelled in the summer of 1932. He had joined forces with the 'Balham Group', a very early Trotskyist organisation. It was the only group inside the CPGB which left as a result of the 'New Line' and the fall of Trotsky (81). They were asked for the undertakings they had earlier refused. In August 1932, Chandler gave a full enough retraction and was re-admitted to Marylebone No. 2 branch (82). Purkis did not comply quite so quickly and was not re-admitted to the Association until October 1932 (83). Later in the 1930s both men were further rehabilitated by being elected to the Executive Committee: Purkis in 1936 and Chandler in 1939 (84). Prior to this, in 1938, Chandler had been awarded the Association's gold medal because of his organising work (85). Purkis was a member of a small sub-committee set up by the Executive Committee in 1937, in a response to a motion expressing dissatisfaction with the Association's journal at that year's Annual Conference (86).

This chapter may not present the Executive Committee and the officers in a very sympathetic light. People in authority are often not at their most endearing when coping with their critics. They may well be at their sharpest and least relenting when they perceive a major threat. This does not appear to be the way the Eastleigh incident was regarded. It seems to have been attributed to muddled, uninformed thinking and a conflict of personalities, important because an important principle of union practice happened to be involved. The case of workers' education

is in a different order of dissent. G.D.H. Cole's account, referred to at the beginning of this chapter, says

"...the organisation of classes up and down the country (soon united in the National Council of Labour Colleges) brought about a fight with the WEA in every large-sized town or union. Many sleepy trades councils and Labour parties were astonished by a violent conflict between rival WEA and 'Plebs' propagandists...." (87).

If his story is to be trusted, the officers of the Association must have had some idea what sort of fight they might have on their hands. It was the most determined and persistent onslaught from the ranks they had faced so far. As has been shown, it began with a resolution passed at the Annual Conference of 1920 in favour of an Association scholarship at the Central Labour College. The rules of the union, like most other union rule-books, confirm the annual conference as the supreme authority of the union (88). But there is normally only one delegate conference a year and the officials and Executive Committee make all the major decisions between delegate conferences. This means that, in practice, if the conference passes a resolution against the wishes of the officers and the Executive Committee, then they may simply frustrate the wishes of the conference by inaction or delays in implementing the resolutions. In the case of the scholarship at the Central Labour College they went even further. To sum up the narrative; in 1920, Conference resolved that at least one scholarship should be taken up at the Central Labour College. In 1921 the Executive Committee persuaded Conference that a motion urging the implementation of the scholarship resolution be not put and that, instead, the matter be left in their hands. In 1922, a pro-WETUC resolution was passed by the Annual Conference. At this stage, the membership appears to have thought that this left open the option of either kind of facility, whether on WEA or NCLC lines. In 1923, a motion to implement the 1920 resolution was not debated, and, in 1924, a

resolution was passed rescinding it. The Executive Committee's arguments from superior knowledge had won the day, and they had avoided implementing the will of the annual conference for four years.

This summary is not compiled to criticise the Executive Committee and the officers for abuse of their power. It seems that the Executive got its way through the advantage of administrative continuity and the skilful use of information. An attempt is made in the rule book to distribute administrative power in the union. In theory it is balanced, but union activists at any level understand its effective distribution. The officers and the Executive Committee concerned themselves with the affairs debated at delegate conferences, but they always appear to have coped with the outcomes of conferences by assessing some as legitimisation of decisions they had already made and others as insights into worries and feelings of the general membership, which could not come to them in any other way. They perceived their role in terms of creative administration, including policy formulation, rather than of passive subservience to Conference.

The final example of dissident pressure inside the Association is in one way the most serious, because the members concerned were also members of an international revolutionary movement. The Executive Committee was able to deal with the threat with comparative ease. Supporters of the Minority Movement would have argued that the officers and Executive Committee were not sincere when they called themselves socialists; that they were not interested in the success of the working-class movement. On the other hand, the logic of the Minority's position was that the Association should risk everything, that everything they had built up over the years on what to many members and certainly its officers and Executive, would appear to be the improbable premise that a workers' State could be set up in Britain. The point of view of the

Association's establishment is clear from a *Railway Service Journal's* editorial of May, 1922:

Many of the present members ... know ... of the unsatisfactoriness of the conditions in railway offices twenty five years ago

We do not regard the present conditions as satisfactory, but twenty-five years ago they would have seemed unattainable(89).

Only the most dogmatic ideologue could dissent from the view that the workers represented by the union should do other than consolidate their achievements. It was unthinkable that these could be otherwise perceived as, for instance, concessions by a dominant class. When Walkden became General Secretary in 1906, the membership stood at 6,277 and the total funds were £588 (90). Using the Executive's own estimate of potential membership as 100,000 (91), this meant that the Association had recruited 6 per cent of its possible membership. The ways whereby the Association could attempt to influence the railway companies were very limited; they could do no more than persuade some of the members to approach the management as a delegation. For railway clerks interested in promotion and, from all that has been written, with good reason to fear the railway management, this must have been an unnerving experience and only moderately useful. Practically the only industrial representative bodies through which the Association members could influence the railway companies were superannuation committees and the influence which could be brought to bear through them was limited to little more than their nominal field of operation.

By 1930, there were countless ways whereby the Association could influence the employers. Recognition meant that, together with the other two railway trade unions, it faced these employers at various levels: National Wages Board, Central Wages Board, Railway Councils, Sectional Railway Councils and Local Departmental Committees (92). The

Association's negotiators also met the employers at other times, both on formal and informal occasions. All these contacts meant that on one level or another, negotiation was practically continuous. All in all, recognition and its aftermath gave the union's Executive ample grounds for confidence that the distribution of power between management and workers had materially changed. Moreover, they could point to changes not only in the arena of industrial relations but in that of Parliamentary politics as well. Parliamentary activities are dealt with at length in chapter 4, but, briefly, they derived from the union's perception of the value of direct Parliamentary representation of railway workers' interests. The railway companies needed to approach Parliament at intervals so that they could initiate and develop their projects; they needed private legislation in order to function. Private legislation needs to be uncontentious; if it is opposed its further progress through Parliament becomes extremely hazardous. The opportunity to voice interests at Parliamentary level, possibly by dissent, could be a potent weapon. This is one of the reasons for the RCA's support of a NUR-sponsored M.P. from about 1906, and for their attempts to sponsor M.Ps since 1910. In 1930, there were eight RCA-sponsored M.Ps who could block private legislation by making it contentious.

However, the limited fields of action open to the Association before 1919 had certain advantages over the institutionalised arrangements established by 1930. In earlier days, members could see how influence was brought to bear, or at least hear from other ordinary members what was being done. In 1930, the pressures whereby the union sought to affect decision-making mostly had to be mobilised in private; for much of the time negotiations had to be confidential. In short, the union's officials were becoming detached from the ordinary membership. The Eastleigh case exemplifies this and the attention the E.C. paid to it

suggests that they understood its implications well enough to go to some lengths to re-establish an identity of interest, but did not fully appreciate that it might signify a more general development. The affair of *The Jogger*, ideologies apart, is a further example. *The Jogger* criticised the Association's negotiators for accepting a 2½ per cent cut in salaries, unaware that the railway companies had sought much larger cuts and that the final figure was the result of hard bargaining. Another aspect of *The Jogger's* criticisms may be judged unfair: this was that Walkden was drawing a salary of £1,000 from the Association. But when he became General Secretary in 1906 he was already a goods agent, at the age of 33. If he had stayed with his railway company and could have brought to bear the energy and administrative ability he displayed in the service of the Association, he could certainly have expected to be earning more than £1,000.

But, unfair or not, the criticism shows that some members, at least, saw their General Secretary's life chances as very different from their own and, consequently, as likely to inhibit his perception of their interests - a classic anxiety of unions whose officers have life-time tenure.

The separation of the secretariat from the members is one of the characteristics said to be typical of developed organisations; tendencies to rigidity, oligarchy, and, in general, a trend for the organisation's executive hierarchy to set a high priority of maintaining its own security and perpetuation, possibly at the expense of pursuing the aims that justify its existence (93). This may well mean over-riding members' express wishes on occasion, and circumventing democratic procedures. The conflict about workers' education may be seen in this light, and the executive's strong reaction to *The Jogger* may be seen as the union's establishment stamping on a grass-roots growth as early as it could

because of its potential threat to their own position. Of course, there are arguments on the other side; that the establishment's secure position coincides with that of the union; that the Executive Council had to pay regard to its special knowledge and better information as well as to the members' wishes; that simplistic versions of democratic management can be impracticable, possibly dangerous, in large and complex organisations; and that, in the end, the test of a good union is its ability to hold its members. The debate on this is never closed; what is interesting about the conflicts within the Association in the 1920's and 1930's is that they show the union to be a maturing organisation, displaying the disadvantages as well as the advantages of maturation (94).



## CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has been offered as a study of a particular type of trade union - 'white-collar' - over a particular period of its history. The review of theoretical perceptions likely to be relevant to such a study, presented in the Introduction, concluded that there was little to be gained from models centred on the 'white-collar' character of the Association, but that Robert Michels' theory of creeping oligarchy in the bureaucracy of democratically-based organisations has much to offer.

The Association's inter-war history presents at least three illustrations of Michels' theory: its Executive's decision to support the strike that was proposed in 1921, despite manifest evidence of lack of members' support; the effort and investment that went into trying to get the General Secretary elected to the House of Commons; and the Executive's treatment of dissension. In all these instances, which represent quite different aspects of the Association's activities, the Executive's authority was threatened, or was at least in some sense on the line. It is in such circumstances that organisational realities are revealed.

In the first illustration, the 'Black Friday' episode of Chapter 5, the Executive's ~~behaviour~~ <sup>behaviour was</sup> not finally questioned because the proposed strike did not eventuate. The second, an aspect of the 'Parliamentary Affairs' discussed in Chapter 3, was not a single incident but a sustained exercise that extended beyond the central issue of the General Secretary's seat. Its implications are complicated because although control of Parliamentary seats was functional for the Association's industrial ends, it also represented social and economic advantages for individuals. The power to allocate candidatures for safe seats could be used to reward, to punish, and to further self-interest. The

Association was stimulated into instituting safeguards a little late in the day, not particularly to curb the self-serving tendencies of ambitious officers but to avoid having to withstand any more crises like the loss of personnel to Parliament in 1929. The rules it then instituted may be held as evidence against Michels' theory, in that they represent a democratic check. It should be noted, however, that other unions recognised this danger and introduced safeguards before the Association's, but they were not necessarily proof against office-holders' strong personalities. In 1891 the ASRS (the main precursor of the NUR) decided that its full-time officials were not eligible as parliamentary candidates(1), but even so the rule was over-ridden in the case of J.H. Thomas, the NUR's General Secretary from 1916 to 1931(2). The third illustration might almost stand as a case-study of Michels' theory in action, although its discussion in Chapter 6 did not so present it. The Executive's different methods of dealing with dissent, from 'talk over tea cakes' with the Eastleigh rebels to 'bell, book and candle' for avowed communists, show its capacity for control. Its treatment of the Labour College question shows the extent to which a confident Executive could moderate and even subvert the will of the membership as expressed through the Annual Conference, theoretically the ultimate source of democratic control.

In practice, the ultimate check on the Executive's oligarchic power, given the level of organisation achieved by 1918 and sustained thereafter, was the Association's ability to maintain its membership. This raises a number of questions not directly relevant to the organisational theory that helps explain some aspects of the Association's inter-war history; nor are other theoretical perspectives on white-collar unionism helpful, except insofar as in directing attention to members' characteristics and behaviour they may suggest propositions about one central problem. This is the conundrum that underlies any assessment of trade unions' behaviour: the extent to which a

silent majority betokens satisfaction or apathy. The validity of organisational theory that helps to explain successful oligarchic behaviour in a trade union's Executive does not mean that such an Executive's power is unlimited or exercised always, usually or even ever against the interests of most of its union's members. The questions raised in the Association's case, between the wars, are to do with its political character, its behaviour during a period that was not favourable to industrial organisation, and the socio-economic characteristics of the members.

One notable aspect of the Association is its adherence to the TUC and the Labour Party. This began before the first World War and the Association was well integrated into the Labour Movement thereafter. This was unusual for a white-collar union, and may be explained at least in part by the limits of the Labour Party's scope for pursuing extreme policies. The Association's political moderation could be reconciled with the main stream of Labour's activities and it could spurn some industrial adventures that beckoned, but its political affiliations led it into the biggest one of the period: the General Strike.

During the years leading up to the strike, and particularly in the three years immediately after the end of the first World War, the Association's Executive was more disposed to industrial militancy than were its members. The Black Friday episode, already cited in this chapter, is an illustration of this phenomenon, mentioned in the Introduction as a notable feature of the Association's inter-war history, and especially so in <sup>view of</sup> the Association's earlier policy of non-striking. In discussion surrounding the General Strike, Chapter 5 suggests that the phenomenon was more understandable than at first sight might appear: that is, whilst moderation and prudence were consistent with the attitudes consistent with white-collar work, railway clerks of the 1920s found themselves in circumstances in which a degree of industrial

militancy was a ~~rational~~ response. On this analysis, the Executive's perceptions may have been ahead of those of the membership at large, but were not especially divergent; but clearly a balance had to be achieved between the general rationale of moderation and the particular and temporal case for militancy. More detailed accounts of the institutional behaviour of other white-collar unions, which from time to time must also have been faced with similar needs to balance conflicts of rationale, <sup>may</sup> throw up similar instances of leaderships that were, on occasion, more militant than their members. More knowledge of the institutional deliberations and behaviour of white-collar leaders on occasions when, like the Association's Executive in the early 1920s, they had to provide leadership that reconciled strategies of pursuing members' immediately perceivable economic interests with the conditions of their lives and work in a stratified industrial society would make for a better-informed interpretation of the Executive's attitudes and contribute to ~~the~~ theories of white-collar unionism.

It was the aftermath of the Strike that best illustrates the Association's character. It worked long and hard to recover, negotiating persistently for the available work to be shared out fairly and for its members to be reinstated. Other unions did the same, but the Association was notable in refusing to accept its share of the general decline in membership with philosophic resignation. It mounted a special campaign to bring back its lost members and to persuade them to pay the political levy. On the other hand, the general mood of the Association was against its more left-wing members who, dismayed at the quietism that they perceived to be overtaking their trade union, attempted to revive its pre-Strike activity. The Executive was certainly able to rely on its oligarchic security in exerting discipline, but the general membership was not disposed to resist.

The Parliamentary activity that has already been referred to as evidence of the Association's Executive's oligarchic tendencies was nevertheless an aspect of its industrial policy, dating back to before the first World War. That is, the Executive's pursuit of Parliamentary representation was in principle unexceptionable; what was questionable were aspects of the way the policy was pursued.

Parliamentary activity began purely as part of the Association's industrial policy but later it became an important element in the Labour Party's attempt to widen its electoral base. Ross McKibbin has explained how the Labour Party's M.P.s were originally elected by urban, industrialised constituencies(3). The Party's realisation that it could not become an alternative government as long as it was confined to such constituencies was one reason for widening out, but there was another that applied even at the cost of unsuccessful candidatures. If a constituency is uncontested, electoral forces are released to help the governing party's candidates in vulnerable constituencies. From the 1922 election onwards, members of the Association were helped to fight hopeless campaigns in 'rural constituencies': two in 1922; three in 1923, 1924 and 1929; thirteen in 1935. This increasing effort must have gladdened the hearts of the Labour Party's campaign managers.

The Association's role in national politics clearly has implications for an assessment of the characteristics of its members. Theoretical models of white-collar trade unionism are insufficiently analytic and there is an acknowledged absence of information about individual members of the Association in this account, and of their lives and work. The main reason is the same as that which makes Michels' perspective more illuminating than others: it is the extent of institutional organisation that the Association had achieved by 1919. This study is presented from the point of view of the

Association as an entity pursuing the industrial objectives that are a trade union's *raison d'etre*: an institutional account and none the worse for that. By 1918 the Association's organisational structure was well established, and ordinary members were unlikely to distinguish themselves in union affairs otherwise than through its formal offices and procedures. As has been shown, the few who tried to influence affairs in other ways needed to be strongly motivated. This is not to say that there was no potential for change by way of grass-roots activism, either in the Association or in other trade unions with the degree of organisation that it manifested in the 1920s and 1930s; but the general conditions of the times were not propitious. Members may have seen the Association as a bureaucratic monster - if they conceptualised it at all - but it was their own monster and they needed one to face up to the railway companies. A minority immersed themselves in lay administration and possibly worked their way on to the Executive, but the limitations of inclinations and opportunities meant that the majority could only accept the Association as a helpful force, perhaps grumble about it sometimes, and get on with their lives.

What sort of lives these were is, nevertheless, a justifiable concern of anyone seeking to understand their trade unionism. The Association's members were part of the large army of clerks who did the railway companies' routine work, made necessary by the simple office technology of the times. They were not ~~amongst the most highly paid~~ clerical workers, but their jobs were secure. Their reasonable aspirations were confined to what might be described, with all the reservations that must surround so broad a categorisation, as a lower middle-class life-style.

There has been little scope in this account for attention to the day-to-day realities of the Association's members' working lives. Some sidelights are cast by its references to working conditions, pay and pensions; others

come from its use of the Association's publications. Other publications, not drawn on at all, are those produced by the railway companies for their employees, but the most fugitive and potentially the most useful are those put out by the clerks themselves. One such source that is available comes from the Railway Clearing House. Before the first World War it had the largest concentration of railway clerks, and was possibly also London's largest concentration of clerks of any kind. It had a literary society from 1849, financially helped by the employer but run by a committee of clerks(4). The communist magazine *The Jogger*, drawn on for Chapter 6's discussion of dissension, was by way of a riposte to *The Jigger*, Railway Clearing House clerks' more orthodox publication that ran from 1921 to 1932; copies of all its issues have been preserved(5). They detail the urban and rural activities of various interest groups that the clerks organised in their spare time. But it is not to be expected that such publications would contain much direct information about working life, although they yield some.

For the most part, the Association's ordinary members remain 'hidden from history', to borrow the feminist coinage that has been used in connection with historians' neglect of women's history(6). Women are a group within the larger category of railway clerks whose history is hidden along with the rest, not only because of the absence of day-to-day information but because their small part in the Association's institutional history has regrettably been outside the scope of this presentation of it. Despite the general growth of clerical work as an occupation for women, on the railways it was largely men's work, as is demonstrated in the analysis of the workforce at Appendix I. However, the Association's treatment of its women members who had to leave the employment they took up in the first World War, and its intimations of a further influx with the onset of the second, are minor concerns of women's, trade unions' and occupational histories that deserve attention. But by and

large, ordinary members' day-to-day lives cannot be covered in a chronicle that gives centrality to a trade union's pursuit of its industrial objectives through negotiations with employers. The voices from below are more likely to be heard through the work of other historians than those who are primarily concerned with trade union history as conventionally defined. The developing specialism of oral history promises to be a productive source, as is work of the kind pioneered by John Burnett's search for hitherto neglected documentary accounts of ordinary lives(7).

For reasons of space and scope, this account has not covered the Association's relations with other unions, except insofar as they were entailed in specific negotiations. This is an aspect of trade union history that tends generally to be neglected in institutional accounts, no doubt for the same reasons that have dictated its exclusion from this one. It should be noted as a topic deserving of further research, likely to offer something of a corrective to the narrowness to which institutional accounts are unavoidably prone, and possibly fruitful for the development of more satisfactory theoretical approaches to trade union history.

In practical terms, how can the two inter-war decades be assessed? The Association weathered its way through them, and 'weathering' is an apt term, as the main theme that runs through the story is the Association's persistence in relatively adverse circumstances.

It started off well, with recognition after twenty two years' striving, its membership only twenty per cent short of the maximum, and around £50,000 in its funds. An early strain on its resources came with the dismissal of the temporary clerks, many of them women, who had been recruited to replace men who had joined the armed forces during the first World War. The Association offered them full membership, which included an unemployment allowance; the ex-servicemens' speedy return led to wholesale dismissals that



drained the Associations' funds by about half in 1919. The settlement of the General Strike involved the Association in the activity that was its main function, negotiation with employers. This experience, stressful and relatively early in the Association's history as a trade union with employers' recognition, was unorthodox in many respects but not least in entailing the cooperation with other railway unions that was to be a feature of its wage negotiations for some time. The conditions that favoured combined negotiations also favoured quiescence in the membership. It was an era of deflation, when wage bargaining was a matter of resisting wage-cuts and speeding their restoration, of protecting members' position rather than advancing it. The whole railway work-force was similarly affected; it made sense for the unions to combine as long as their problems were seen as common. Later, when improvements seemed possible, each union saw its best way forward as through independent negotiations once more, and promoted its members' separate, specific interests.

Pensions were traditionally a perquisite of the white-collar segment of the work-force, so it was the Association alone that took on the complex problem of sorting out the tangled affairs of the railway companies' pension funds. The result was one decent fund, one half-decent one, and five that were no more than moderate: perhaps not much of an achievement by some standards, but worth at least two cheers in a period when money was short and especially so for the railway companies.

An obvious question to be asked of industrial relations is: do trade unions make any difference? It is certainly difficult to isolate the effects of workers' organisations from other factors that bear on their industrial fortunes, but the Association may justifiably claim that, apart from any other benefits, its industrial strategies were crucial in securing and improving railway clerks' socio-economic status between the wars in two particular ways.

The wage settlement of 1919-20 brought railway clerks into the category of better-paid clerical workers, with pay approaching that of bank clerks, and the Association's subsequent alliance with other unions helped it to deal with wage cuts better than other groups of clerical workers(8). The outcome of the negotiations on pension funds were the other aspect of the Association's success: perhaps not ideal, but markedly better than might have been hoped for without the Association's mixture of Parliamentary tactics and negotiating skill.

But throughout the period, the Association's strategies were necessarily defensive rather than aggressive. Even though it started out so well, the Association had to use all its talents to get from the end of the first World War to the beginning of the second as successfully as it did. It had fewer members and branches than it started with, but enough to sustain its established infrastructure and to face the problems of another war, with the experience of the first to look back on. Both World Wars presented trade unions with opportunities as well as problems, and have in general been beneficial for unions and their associated political party. Peacetime has been less favourable. What is debatable, and to be taken up by the Association's next chronicler, are the Association's wartime prospects, what it made of the challenges and opportunities that came between 1939 and 1945, and its fortunes in the ensuing peace.

### Introduction : Notes

1. For a brief survey of 'white collar' unions in the early 1920's which brings out their differences in industrial strategy see G. D. H. Cole, *Organised Labour*, 1924.
2. See *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXI No. 4, December 1970 pp. 467-468; Vol. XXVI No. 1, March 1975 p. 130; *Sociology*, Vol. 5 No. 2 May 1971 pp. 261 & 262; G. S. Bain, D. Cooke, & V. Ellis, *Social Stratification and Trade Unionism*, London, 1973 pp. 1 & 2.
3. For examples of theory see R. Hyman and R. Price eds. *The New Working Class? White Collar Workers and their Organisations*, London, 1983 (1983, 1985). a run of *Sociology*, The Journal of the British Sociological Association: Vol. 10. No. 3, Sept. 1976; Vol. 12. No. 1, Jan. 1978; Vol. 13. Nos. 1 & 3, Jan & Sept. 1979; Vol. 14. Nos. 1, 2 & 3, Feb., May & Aug. 1980; and Vol. 17. No. 4. Nov. 1983.
4. David Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker*, Oxford, 1958 (1989) p. 14.
5. Ibid.
6. Lockwood op. cit. p. 201.
7. George Sayers Bain, *The Growth of White Collar Unionism*, Oxford, 1970, pp. 4-9.
8. *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XXI No. 4, December 1970 p. 468, a review by K. Prandy of *The Growth of White Collar Unionism*, op. cit.
9. ~~Hyman and Price, op. cit.,~~  
p. 234; *Sociology*, Vol 10, No. 3 September 1970 p. 411 for the original article.
10. C. Smith, 'The New Middle Class Revisited', in *Sociology*, Vol. 17 No. 4 November 1983 p. 576.
11. One of the more recent publications was by the Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois 1948 and 1958.
12. Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, Glencoe, Illinois, 1948, p. 401.
13. R. Hyman, *Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism*, London, 1973, p. 14 n. 41. The translators of *Political Parties* into English were also active in British left-wing politics. They were a retired American medical practitioner and his wife, Eden and Cedar Paul; see *The Labour College Movement*, J. P. M. Millar, London, 1979, pps. 32, 88, 237. They also figured in the Home Intelligence reports to the Cabinet in 1918 (PRO/CAB/24/79, pp. 178 & 179 [5 & 6,])

14. Seymour Martin Lipset, Martin A. Trow, and James S. Coleman, *Union Democracy*, Glencoe Illinois, 1956.
15. The British print trade unions - especially in Fleet Street - used to be stronger and more militant than most other trade unions, see James Moran, *NATSOPA: Seventy-Five Years*, Oxford, 1964.
16. E.M. Forster, *Two Cheers for Democracy*, London, 1951.
17. See Chapter 2,
18. See Chapter 2 and Appendix I, Statistical Table,
19. See Appendix I, Statistical Table,
20. See Appendix I Statistical Table; in 1938, only 13% of railway clerks were women.
21. A London and North Western Company clerk was paid only £30 p.a. in 1912 in his first year - it was expected that he would then be aged 15, but he would have to wait until his fourteenth year of employment to get £110 p.a. and this was in London; outside, he was paid less (*Railway Clerk*, December 1912.) This was possible because the cost of living was so low - compared to more recent times. It has been estimated that if the purchasing power of the pound in 1900 is taken as 20/- (100p.), in 1912 it still stood at 17/3 (86p.) but in 1978 it was worth only 5p. (David Butler and Anne Sloman), *British Political Facts 1900 1979*, 5th Edition, London, 1980,
22. There is much information about railway clerks' salaries in *The Railway Clerk* between 1910 and 1914, because the Association was organising its members to petition their employers to obtain higher pay to deal with the increase in the cost of living. See especially the issues for September, 1911; September, 1912; and February, 1915.
23. The Association first published these figures in *The Railway Clerk* of February, 1911; subsequently, the General Secretary, A.G. Walkden used them in an article he wrote for the *Saturday Journal* of June 8th, 1912 and they were also quoted in a commemorative booklet published by the Association in 1947 to celebrate its first fifty year, : *Railway Clerks Association, 1897-1947, 50 Years of Trade Union Endeavour*
24. See Chapter 5 for a little more discussion of this, in connection with senior staff on strike.
25. In January, 1913, the Executive was told that a clerk employed by the Midland Railway Company was being intimidated, so it was decided to have The Railways (No. 2) Bill blocked see MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/979. This pressure on the railway company was successful and it promised to stop intimidating its clerks (MSS. 55B/EC/2/1079). This is one of a number of similar instances.

26. A. Tranter, 'The Railway Clerks' Association: its origins and History to 1921,' University of Cambridge, unpublished Ph.D thesis No. D. 35262/81:
27. Railway managements would say that they employ many types of white collar worker: Accountants, draughtsmen, middle management etc.; they would also say that since the second World War reorganisation has changed both the balance and distribution of staff considerably, but this distinction can still be made even though it was even more pronounced prior to the first World War.
28. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1688, A. 7; and *The Railway Clerk* June, 1910.
29. To illustrate this here are comparative staff figures for three railway stations in 1914. One is a small London suburban station, Blackhorse Road (in Tottenham), one a larger station in industrial Yorkshire, Otley, and a large city station, Sheffield (also in Yorkshire). Blackhorse Road: 3 managerial and clerical staff, 6 manual workers (PRO. RAIL. 491/1037); Otley: 4 managerial and clerical staff, 10 manual workers (PRO. RAIL. 491/1037); Sheffield: 45 managerial and clerical staff, 152 manual workers (PRO. RAIL. 491/1011)
30. I use the past tense, because what I am describing are pre-Beeching railway stations. It is still possible to discover work-situations such as I have described on the railway system, but there are very few of them, they can only give a hint of how many railway employees worked prior to the 1960s.
31. G. S. Bain, *The Growth of White Collar Trade Unionism*, Oxford, 1970 pp. 84-86.
32. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) was the main constituent of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) which was set up in 1913. The ASRS dates back to 1871. (P. S. Bagwell op. cit. pp. 46-69 and 309-340).
33. P. S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen, London, 1963, p. 90.*
34. *Ibid.* pp. 275-287 and 289-307.
35. I am indebted to Professor P. S. Bagwell who pointed out to me this apparent correlation between the all-grades movements and the surges in membership of the Association.
36. See the first series of E. C. minutes from Feb. 1900-Mar. 1906. MSS. 55B/1/EC/1. Minute for 23rd April, 1904, records the employment of the 'youth'.
37. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1149(d).
38. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1172
39. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1149(d). The cost was £2,450 per year.

40. This a well attested phenomenon. There is a table on pages 261-263 of *A History of Trade Unionism*, Henry Pelling, London, 1963, which illustrates it.
41. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5863.
42. See Appendix II. The variation in membership is discussed more fully in Chapter 5 (The General Strike).
43. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3438
44. P.S. Bagwell op. cit. pp. 297, 311
45. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1206; MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1425.
46. See the letter from Lord Ashfield to Sir Eric Geddes dated 17 May 1920 (PRO/MT/19) for a management view of industrial militancy in one area of the railway industry. Although written in 1920, it is looking back to 1919.
47. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2080.
48. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2147. Conscription had been re-introduced, despite a firm pledge by Lloyd George during the election. Many secret war-time agreements thought necessary at the time were being revealed, but what was of more import for the Labour Movement was the revelation by the *Daily Herald*, on 13 May, that commanding officers were being asked if their men would act as strike-breakers; this ties in with the re-introduction of conscription. (see H. A. Clegg, *A History of Trade Unions since 1889, Volume II 1911-1933*, pp. 284 & 285).
49. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2148.
50. *The Railway Clerk* June 1906.
51. *The Railway Clerk* July 1912; *The Railway Service Journal* May 1937, p. 155.
52. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3557, 3609, 3645, 3653, 3656; MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3709, 3764, 3928.
53. Keith Middlemass, *Politics in Industrial Society: The Experience of the British System Since 1911*, London, 1979, pp. 71 & 72; A. J. P. Taylor, *English History 1914 - 1945*, Oxford, 1965 (Penguin 1976) pp. 45 & 46; Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, London 1965 (Penguin 1967) pp. 28 & 29.
54. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1234.
55. Between 1920 and 1926, there were a number of incidents when the Head Office and Executive Committee displayed more militant attitudes than the membership at large. The subscription was doubled in 1921 to create a strike fund, membership dropped by nearly a quarter, prior to Black Friday; the E.C. tried to get the membership at large to support a proposed Triple Alliance strike, by calling a special delegate conference, holding meetings in the main railway centres, and circularising all the

Association's branches. It got no support, but it was still prepared to discuss exercising its right to call the Association out on strike, when it heard that the original strike

had been called off; it

agreed to join the Industrial Alliance, but the next annual conference voted against this. Also,

it should be

noted that the membership at large was not consulted when the Association decided to join in the 1925 coal embargo and the General Strike. All these topics are more fully discussed in Chapter 5, the General Strike.

Chapter 1 Working Conditions and Negotiating machinery:

The Background: Notes

1. Guy Routh, *Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906 - 79*, London, 1965 (paperback 1980) p. 90.
2. This comes from a report which was presented to section F of the British Association at their conference in Sheffield in 1910, and was often cited in the Association's publications.
3. *The Railway Service Journal*, May 1922, title page. A number of the pamphlets and publications issued by the Association before the first World War have been used for this part of the chapter. These are:

*The Life of the Railway Clerk*, Prepared by three experienced railwaymen who have performed a collective total of fifty-one years service in the station and managing offices of three of the principal railways, London, 1911.

*Permanency or Dismissal*, The Railway Clerks' Association, Wolverhampton, 1913.

A series of articles by A. J. Walkden in *The Saturday Journal*, 1912, collectively called *Clerk Slaves of our Railways*: April 20th, *The Booking Clerk*; May 4th *The Telegraph Clerk*; June 1st, *The Station-Master*, ~~concluding article, summing up, June 8th.~~

In 1922, the Association also published material looking back on the pre-war years:

T. H. Gill, *Twenty-five years of Work and Progress through the R. C. A.*, London, 1922.

*Twenty-five, A Peep at the Past and a pioneer*, *The Railway Service Journal*, May, 1922, title page.

4. Philip Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy 1842-1922*, London, 1968, pp. 154-172.
5. *The Railway Service Journal*, May, 1922, title page; *The Saturday Journal*, April 20th, 1912, page 5, May 4th, 1912, p. 28, and June 8th, 1912, p. 6.
6. T. H. Gill op. cit.; *The RCA and its Path of Progress*, A. G. Walkden, London, 1928; *The Railway Clerk*, January, 1908.
7. Bagwell op. cit. pp. 157-158.
8. Bernard Waites, *A Class Society at War England 1914-18*, Leamington Spa, 1987 p. 255 quoting a speech of Mr. Romeril printed in *Railway Clerk* of February 1918. Bagwell op. cit. p. 158 & 159.
9. *The Saturday Journal* articles op. cit. and the other early Association articles mention this. Bagwell discusses the Railway Clearing House accommodation in op. cit. pp. 159 - 168.
10. *The Railway Clerk*, October, 1915, p. 199.



11. Paul B. Johnson, *Land Fit for Heroes, The Planning of Reconstruction 1916-1919*, Chicago, 1968. A large part of the reconstruction process was concerned with absorbing the armed forces into civilian life, after the War.
12. Hugh Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, Vol. II 1911 - 1933*, Oxford, 1985, (paperback 1987) pp. 253-255.
13. J.R. Raynes, *Engines and Men*, Leeds, 1921, pp. 206 - 207.
14. This agreement can be found at MSS.55G/5/PCS/2.
15. See MSS.55B/1/EC/5/2378 for a complete classification of clerks as at March, 1920. There is also a classification of station-masters at this point. Many station-masters had been promoted from clerks.
16. Philip S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770*, London, 1974, p. 258.
17. Bagwell (*The Transport Revolution*) op.cit. p 257.
18. *Schemes for the establishment of Local Departmental Committees, Sectional Railway Councils, and Railway Councils; also Central and National Wages Boards*. Railway Clerks Association, London, 1922, p.3.
19. During the inflationary period of 1909 - 1912, railway wages needed to be improved if they were to maintain their purchasing power. The *Railway Clerks* of this period have a number of articles describing this method of obtaining pay increases, see especially the issue for 15th December, 1910 pp. 225 & 226.
20. Bagwell (*The Transport Revolution*) op.cit. pp. 239-242. *An Economic History of Transport in Britain*, T.C. Barker & C.I. Savage, London, 1959, pp. 145 & 146.
21. It started life as the Ministry of Ways and Communications Bill.
22. Most writers on transport policy have a fuller account of the manoeuvres described here. A good one can be found in Bagwell(*The Transport Revolution*) op. cit. pp. 239 - 251.
23. The Act itself is The Railways Act 1921 (11 & 12 Geo Vc. 55). There are three contemporary books on this Railway Act: Aggs W. H. & Knowles G.W. *Handbook on Railways: being the Railways Act 1921*, London, 1922; R.W. Royle *The Railways Act 1921*, Manchester, 1924; A.G. Walkden, *The Reorganisation of British Railways, The Railways Act 1921*, London, 1922.
24. The companies were the London Midland and Scottish (LMS), the London and North Eastern (LNER) the Southern (SR), and the Great Western (GWR). The LMS covered a great part of the Midlands, North Wales the west coast route to Glasgow and much of Scotland; The LNER had eastern England the east coast route to Edinburgh and the rest of Scotland; the SR had the commuter routes to London from the south coast. It also had a route to North

24 (cont.) Cornwall via Salisbury and North Devon. The GWR, unlike the other companies was not an amalgamation of a number of railway companies; the pre-War GWR was its core and smaller companies were added on to it. It had the main route to Cornwall, part of the Midlands, south, west and mid Wales.

25. *The Railway Service Journal*, May, 1937, p. 155.

26. P.S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, London, 1963, pp. 408 - 414.

27. *The Railway Service Journal*, May 1937, p. 155.

28. The Railways Act 1921 Part IV , Sections 62-66.

29. See ~~Chapter~~ Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Wage Negotiations 1919 - 1939 : Notes

1. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1234.
2. P.S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, London, 1963, pp. 348 & 349; J.R. Raynes, *Engines and Men*, Leeds, 1921, pp. 174 & 175. The two trade unions are: The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) and the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) now the (RMT) .
3. H. A. Clegg, *A History of Trade Unions since 1889, Vol. II 1911 - 1933*, Oxford, 1985 (1987). pp. 195 & 196.
4. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5863.
5. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1688, MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3438.
6. PRO/MT/6/3503-3507, minute nos. 3923, 4017, 4229, 4638, 4653, 4698, 4699. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1909(b).
7. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1918, 1923, 1924, 1928.
8. CAB/21/169 GT. 6739 pp. 4 & 5.
9. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/19179(a).
10. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1927.
11. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1939, in 1926 and later it called itself the "National Association of Station-masters, Agents, and Yardmasters". It interacted at various times with the Association see: MSS. 55B/1/E C/10/3891, MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7059, 7148, 7173, 7224, MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7357, 7414, 7432, 7486(c).
12. K. Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain, Vol. 4 The North East*, Newton Abbot, 1965, 1974. pp. 21 & 22.
13. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1906, 1817(b), 2010.
14. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2010.
15. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1991.
16. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1997
17. PRO/CAB/23/9, WC 523 pp. 37 - 38 .
18. PRO/CAB/CAB/21/169 GT. 6739
19. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2003
20. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) p. 377.
21. PRO/CAB/21/169 GT. 6739 p. 4
22. MSS. 55B/1/CON/1<sup>1</sup>-4, MSS. 55/1/BR/1.
23. PRO/CAB/21/169 GT. 6739 pp. 8-12.

24. PRO/CAB/23/9 WC. 525. p. 40.
25. This was discussed at the same Cabinet meeting. It was caused by customary meal breaks being limited when the eight-hour day was introduced on 1st February, 1919 see Bagwell (*The Railwaymen*) p. 377; Raynes op. cit pp. 237-239.
26. C.L. Mowat, *Britain between the Wars: 1918 - 1940*, London, 1955, 1966 pp. 24 & 25.
27. PRO/CAB/23/9 WC. 525.
28. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2003.
29. MT/6/3506 min. 4738.
30. MSS/55/1/BR/1.
31. MT/6/3506 min. 4738.
32. MSS. 55/1/CON/14.
33. MSS. 55/1/CON/14.
34. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2133, 2141.
35. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2162, 2169.
36. *The Railway Clerk* of April 1915, quotes it as White Paper 47, but it can be found under the reference: 1914, LXXVII, 639. There was a similar White Paper published in 1914 which can be found under the reference 1913, LVIII, 551.
37. The 1913 data are summarised and aggregated in the *Railway Clerk* of April 1915, in an article which is highly critical of the data and their presentation. The data were collected from the railway companies; some of the smaller railway companies' returns were completed with some originality. But the Board of Trade did not even impose uniformity on its own practices: the 1913 data are based on a weekly average wage for the whole year whereas the 1912 data are based on four separate selected weeks, so it is not possible to make an accurate comparison of the data. Also, the wages of clerks working in the railway clearing houses (English & Irish) are not included.
38. PRO/MT/49/19.
39. Compare MSS. 55/CON/17 pp. 100 - 102 & MSS. 55G/5/PCS/2.
40. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2169.
41. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2178.
42. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2182, 2183, 2186.
43. MSS. 55/1/CON/17.
44. MSS. 55/1/CON/17. pp 103 - 106

45. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2195, 2196, MSS. 55/1/CON/17.
46. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2198.
47. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2202.
48. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2206.
49. *Railway Service Journal*, July, 1921.
50. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2257.
51. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2248.
52. The REC said in 1918 that it would negotiate with the Association for lower-grade clerks, but not for station-master grades nor for higher-grade clerks. The Association would not accept this, so there were no negotiations until the principle was conceded. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1904, 1909(b), PRO/MT/6/3653.
53. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2206.
54. MSS. 55B/1/CON/13 and MSS. 55B/1/CON/15.
55. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2257.
56. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2309 there is a letter from Sir Herbert Walker, Chairman of the Railway Executive Committee setting out this scheme and the Executive's comments on it.
57. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2329.
58. See MSS. 55G/5/PCS/2 and MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2380 for a copy of this agreement.
59. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2684.
60. Annual figures for average national earnings have only been published since 1940. Previous to that date, surveys were made at irregular intervals. The survey nearest in date to 1919 was made in 1924, the period actually used was the week ending 18th October, 1924. The average earnings for that week were £2. 16. 11, *Ministry of Labour Gazette* July 1927. Weekly wage indexes can be found in *British Labour Statistics: Historical Abstract 1886 - 1968*, London, 1971, for the period between the Wars. Using both of these a figure of £170 per annum can be computed for 1919.
61. Labour Statistics op. cit. for weekly wage indexes. (Weekly wage indexes are similar to cost of living indexes, wage rates are collected from employers and then condensed to an index. A selection for this period can be found at Appendix II.
62. There is a cost of living index at Appendix II.
63. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4490 and MSS. 55B.1/EC/14/5197. These data were presented to Section F of the British Association at their

- 63 (cont.) conference in Sheffield in September, 1910. These comparisons were made before the first World War, after the war railway clerks were not so disadvantaged (see Guy Routh, *Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-79*, London, 1986, 1980; table 2.16, p. 90); this may be a result of the Association's better organisation. It is a table A.G. Walker, the General Secretary of the RCA, used in an article in the *Saturday Journal* of 8th June, 1912. It was also printed in the *Railway Clerk* in December 1910. It can be found at Appendix IV. A similar comparison is made when it is felt that the £1,000 per annum for Class I station-masters needs to be justified. A note says: "As paid to Postmasters in principal cities". See MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2135.
64. MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2494.
65. Bagwell (*The Railwaymen*) op. cit. pp. 417-419
66. See Appendix II
67. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2684.
68. , PRO/MT/49/19.
69. PRO/MT/49/19, Letter 17.5.19.
70. PRO/CAB/23/21, Cabinet 36(20) 16th June 1920.
71. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2608.
72. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2597, 2608, 2824
73. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2984. The report of this enquiry has, so far, not come to hand, but it appears to have been primarily designed as a time-wasting exercise. Geddes' own attitude remained hostile to further improvements in railway workers' pay. On the 21st October 1920, he wrote on a minute: "Yes, but the railways cannot increase their pay-bill any more - it has got to stop". (PRO/MT/49/19).
74. PRO/CAB/23/21, Cabinet 36(20) 16th June 1920.
75. Railway Act (1921) Part I.
76. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3371, MSS. 59G/5/PCS/2.
77. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2731.
78. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2728, 2731.
79. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2918 (a).
80. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2952.
81. Railway Act (1921) Part IV Sections 62-66.
82. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2806, PS Bagwell (*The Railwaymen*, op. cit. p. 422.

83. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) , op. cit. pp. 421 & 422.
84. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2984.
85. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2990 (b), National Wages Board Report, Claims referred on 22nd July 1922.
86. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3371, MSS. 59G/5/PCS/2.
87. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3371. The full text of Sir William Mackenzie's judgement can be found at this point in the Executive's minute book.
88. P.S. Bagwell (The Railwaymen), op. cit. pp. 434-437.
89. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3964.
90. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3789, 3800.
91. In 1921, there were 845,799 motor vehicles, (242,500 of which were private cars, 128,200 were goods vehicles). In 1928, the comparable figures were 2,038,594; 884,645; and 305,744. (Basic Road Statistics; as cited in Barker and Savage - see note 92 below).
92. The economics of the change in medium and long-distant inland transport from being practically all by rail to being partly by rail but increasing road competition limiting it, is discussed by a number of commentators, for example: P.S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770*, London 1974, pp. 224 - 294. T.C. Barker and C.I. Savage, *An Economic History of Transport in Britain, London, 1974, pp. 145-186.*
93. A number of commentators have discussed the fluctuations in the British economy between 1919 and 1939. Two examples are: William Ashworth, *An Economic History of England 1870 - 1939*, London 1976, pp. 305 - 431; Derek H. Aldcroft, *The Interwar Economy, 1919-1939*, London, 1971.
94. Bagwell op. cit. (The Transport Revolution) pp. 250-255. Barker & Savage, op. cit. pp. 153 - 158.
95. Bagwell (The Transport Revolution) op. cit. p. 257
96. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4456, 4458,
97. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4483.
98. Gross traffic receipts for the first half of 1928 were compared with the same period of 1927. Passenger train traffic declined by £679,000. Merchandise train traffic declined by £2,377,000. Coal train traffic had declined by £1,721,000 Total receipts declined by £4,777,000 (See following MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4483 on page 223 of the Executive minute book). Since 1923, £31,134,000 had been withdrawn from the railway companies' reserves; this had led to a loss of interest on this capital of £1,556,700. (See following MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4483 on page 231 of the Executive minute book). Various other statistics detailing the losses

- 98 (cont.) incurred by the railway companies can be found on the pages near these locations in the Executive minute book.
99. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4483 on page 227 of the Executive Committee minute book.
100. Sir Felix John Clewett Pole was the General Manager of the Great Western Railway Company from 1921 to 1929 (*'Who Was Who' 1951 - 1960*).
101. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4483 on page 228 of the Executive minute book.
102. P. S. Bagwell (*The Railwaymen*) op. cit. p. 510.
103. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4483 on page 228 of the Executive minute book.
104. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4487.
105. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4487 on pages 240 and 241 of the Executive minute book.
106. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4488.
107. Shopmen are fitters, engineers and labourers in railway workshops. Some were members of the NUR, but others were members of other unions such as the T & G and the AEU (PS Bagwell (*The Railwaymen*) op. cit. pp. 360 and 361).
108. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4489.
109. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4490.
110. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4498.
111. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4528.
112. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4529.
113. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4690.
114. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4717, 4720, 4738, 4766.
115. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4784, the notice was dated 13th August 1929.
116. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4804.
117. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4819.
118. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4819. The decline in receipts despite the rise in goods carried may be because road haulage had taken over the more profitable traffic from the railways. The railway management did not say this, but they did say that, "... the increase during the last few weeks was principally in respect of goods and mineral traffic which, however, were the most expensive traffic to work."



119. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4821. The Minority Movement was campaigning strongly against the 2½% cut and attracting some support (See Chapter 6 of this thesis, 'Dissension').
120. MSS. 55B/1/CON/22.
121. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4821.
122. *Railway Service Journal*, November, 1929, MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4831.
123. MSS. 55/1/CON/31.
124. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/4990, 4994.
125. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5037; See MSS. 55/1/CON/32 for a copy of the 1930 programme.
126. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op.cit. pp.513 and 514.
127. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5075, 5085, 5086.
128. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5087; MSS. 55/CON/32. *Railway Service Journal*, December 1930, pp. 461-463. A copy of the new programme can be found at MSS. 55/1/CON/32.
129. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5093; (See following MSS. 55B/1/12/4483 for details of the 1928 cuts).
130. See classification table following MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2378.
131. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5093.
132. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5098.
133. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5113.
134. *Railway Service Journal*, January 1931, p. 4.
135. National Wages Board (119) Rates of Pay and Conditions of Service - Claims for modifications referred January 1931.
136. NWB Report (119) op.cit.; MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5148. The companies' claims in respect of some enhanced rates of pay were also conceded.
137. NWB Report (119) op.cit. The full text of the Addendum reads:  
 "Whilst concurring in the Findings which provide a measure of assistance for the purpose of enabling the Companies to encounter the immediate difficulties, we desire at the same time to state that in our opinion this enquiry has clearly revealed the necessity for other action, in order that the industry may be in a position to provide the transport facilities desired by industry, commerce and the travelling public. In our view the continuation of four separate Groups of Railways is unsatisfactory. Modern requirements make further co-ordination imperative, and the present enquiry has reinforced our opinion that only along the lines of comprehensive national organisation

- 137(cont.) of all forms of transport under public ownership and control can the problems of the transport industry be overcome."
138. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5156, MSS. 55B/1/CON/23.
139. See the issues of the *Railway Service Journal* for the period whilst the 'truce' was in operation, especially the May and June 1930 issues.
140. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5199.
141. A notable example of this is the General Strike settlement.
142. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5349.
143. TC Barker & Michael Robbins *A History of London Transport, Volume Two - The Twentieth Century to 1970*, London, 1976, pp. 242 - 269.
144. T.C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport, Volume One - The Nineteenth Century*, London, 1963, p. 211.
145. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5329, 5349.
146. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5373. This Bill was first introduced by Herbert Morrison, Minister of Transport in the 1929-1931 Labour Government. When the Government fell in August 1931, it was at first thought that the largely Conservative Government, which succeeded, would drop the Bill, and presumably this is why the railway trade unions were urging the London Traffic Combine to press the Government to reintroduce it. It is of some interest that the Metropolitan Railway put up a stiff fight not to be included in the London Passenger Transport Board. (See Barker & Robbins (20th Century) op. cit. pp. 270 - 282).
147. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5393.
148. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5409 (d)
149. The London Traffic Combine insisted on a much larger group of 'excluded' clerks than did other companies. (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2024, 2095, MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4208, MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4238 (f), MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5843, 5866.
150. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5455, 5469.
151. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5492.
152. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5508.
153. Barker & Robbins (20th Century) op. cit. pp. 270 - 282.
154. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5454, 5513.
155. P. S. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 521.
156. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5528 (a), 5553, MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5773.
157. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 521, MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5513.

158. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5513. This Minister of Transport was a member of the largely Conservative Government, which had come to power in 1931 with a huge majority. He would be very unlikely to be sympathetic to trade union protests.
159. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 521.
160. *Railway Service Journal*, January 1933, p. 27.
161. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5773.
162. Ministry of Transport Returns. These returns show details of staff employed by the railway companies at the end of a week in Spring, each year. In 1933, total staff was 566,300; in 1934 total staff was 575,048.

163. Table 3

Total number in railway employment each year;

1930	1931	1932
656, 530	615, 592	597, 971
1933	1934	1935
566, 300	575, 048	580, 766

August 1932 was the trough of the depression for the economy as a whole, (see the helpful summary of economic indicators in Aldcroft, op. cit., pp. 32-34. A lag in the increase in the total railway labour force is to be expected, because the railway companies would not take on more railway labour until they were convinced that the increase in economic activity was reasonably permanent.

164. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5545; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 1).
165. For Clerical and Supervisory Staff; "All earnings shall be subject to a deduction of 2½%, with a further deduction of 2½% in respect of all earnings in excess of £100 per year, provided that in no case shall any deduction exceed the sum of £15 per year." NWB (119) Findings handed down 5th March 1931.
166. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5545.
167. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5546, 5547.
168. The trade union representatives on the Central Wages Board rejected the railway companies' application on October 27th, 1932. (MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5554; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 1)).
169. *Railway Service Journal*, January 1933, p. 9. Sir Ralph Wedgwood's opening address. *The Railway Service Journal* of January 1933 gives long extracts from the evidence presented at this sitting of the National Wages Board.
170. *Railway Service Journal*, January 1933, pp. 37 & 38, AG Walkden's submission.

171. *Railway Service Journal* January 1933, p. 16, Mr WV Wood's examination. In June 1932, the Government converted a huge block of 5% War Loan - this represented 27% of the National Debt to three-and-a-half per cent loan. (See Aldcroft op.cit. p. 335).
172. Barker & Savage op. cit. pp. 158 - 159.
173. *Railway Service Journal* January 1933, pp. 13-14. Sir Ralph Wedgwood's opening address.
174. *Railway Service Journal* January 1933, p. 32. AG Walkden's submission.
175. *Railway Service Journal* January 1933, p. 31. AG Walkden's submission.
176. *Railway Service Journal* January 1933, pp. 33-34.
177. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5606.
178. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5545.
179. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5606; *Railway Service Journal*, February 1933 pp. 57 - 62.
180. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5606; *Railway Service Journal*, February 1933 pp. 57 - 62.
181. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5624.
182. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5626, 5627, 5628.
183. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5635.
184. Table 4

Total Net Revenue for the four main-line railway companies was the economic indicator used by Sir Ralph Wedgwood at the proceedings of this National Wages Board, so it will be used here.

1929	1930	1931
£44, 983, 143	£37, 716, 114	£33, 370, 537
1932	1933	1934
£26, 425, 192	£28, 804, 163	£31, 480, 717
1935	1936	1937
£32, 921, 754	£35, 730, 560	£37, 902, 347
1938	(See Railway Returns)	
£28, 984, 344		

At a hearing of the National Wages Board, Sir Ralph Wedgwood said that 1933 was proving a better year than 1932, which was the worst one of the depression. Every year after 1933 saw an increase in net revenue. It was small in 1938; this

- 184 (cont.) appears to be a direct result of the railway companies increasing their rates for passengers and goods in 1937.
185. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5653.
186. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5772.
187. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5821.
188. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5842.
189. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5865; this is confirmed in the new machinery of negotiation, paragraph 23 (see following MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6125).
190. The Railways Act (1921), Part IV, Section 64.
191. AG Walkden, *The Reorganisation of British Railways; The Railways Act, 1921*, London, January 1922, pp. 55 - 56.
192. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5900.
193. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5900.
194. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5937.
195. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5985.
196. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5996.
197. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6000.
198. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6022.
199. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6046; the members of the Railway Staff National Tribunal were described as "one member to be selected from time to time by the Railway Companies from a panel previously nominated by them and to serve until the particular issues have been decided; one member to be selected from time to time by the Railway Trade Unions from a panel previously nominated by them, and to serve until the particular issues referred have been decided; a Chairman to be appointed by agreement between the Railway Companies and the Railway Trade Unions, or, failing agreement, to be appointed by the Minister of Labour after consultation with the parties. The appointment may be for a specified period or for the hearing of particular issues." There was a further clause in the Machinery of Negotiation concerning the membership of the Railway Staff National Tribunal; this read: "No Director or official of any of the Railway Companies, of the said Joint Lines or of the Railway Clearing House, and no official or member of any of the Railway Trade Unions shall be eligible for appointment as a member of the Railway Staff National Tribunal".  
(See the texts of both the revised Machinery of Negotiation (following MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6125) and the original draft (MSS. 55B. /1/EC/16/5937.
200. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 543.

201. See copy of amended Machinery of Negotiation following MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6125.
202. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6144.
203. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6144. A strong expression of the management's approval of the change can be found in PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 1), a paper entitled 'Comparison between the New and Old Machinery of Negotiation'.
204. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. pp. 543-544.
205. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5927, 5928.
206. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5959; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 1).
207. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5997.
208. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6021.
209. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6023.
210. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6024; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 1).
211. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6023.
212. The railway managers estimated that the abolition of the first 2% would cost £2,300,000 compared to £1,100,000 for the abolition of the second 2% (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6026).
213. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6021, 6023, 6024, 6025, 6026, 6027. The text of the agreement can be found following MSS/55B/1/EC/17/6027; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 1).
214. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6037, 6048.
215. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6126 (b).
216. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6126 (a).
217. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) pp. 548 - 549.
218. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6229.
219. Net Railway revenue for the three years was: 1930: £37,716,114; 1934: £31,480,717; 1935: £32,921,754.
220. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6352.
221. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6366, MSS. 55B/1/18/6372 (3).
222. The two suggestions are designated (a) and (b) in the Executive minutes.

(a) That the 2% deduction should cease to apply to anyone earning less than 55/- per week, with a "scaling-off" of the percentage deduction in respect of earnings from 55/- to 60/- and the full 2% to apply to earnings amounting to more than 60/- per week.

222(cont.) (b) That the present 2½% deduction should be reduced to 1½% in respect of the first 40/- of weekly earnings, the full 2½% to apply in respect of any earnings in excess of 40/- per week, with a continuance of the present proviso that no adult's earnings should be reduced below 41/6d per week.

The Companies stated that the cost in the case of either of these propositions would be approximately £600,000 per annum. (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6409).

223. Bagwell (The Transport Revolution) op. cit. pp. 255 - 258.
224. See earlier in this chapter ~~to~~ references to pooling agreements and the search for safe guards for staff.
225. C. L. Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars, 1918 - 1940*, London, 1966, p. 341. PRO/RAIL/421/44, p. 27.
226. P. S. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 549.
227. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6435. The companies' offer was: "That as from the first full pay, following July 1st 1936, the deduction of 2½% from all earnings at present operating under the Agreement of 10th August 1934, shall be replaced by a deduction of 1½% from all earnings. Conditions of service as determined by National Wages Board Decision No. 119 to continue in force. These arrangements to operate for a period of twelve months and thereafter until varied by agreement or by decision of the Railway Staff National Tribunal". The main difference between this offer and the union's suggestion was that it would take effect from the beginning of July instead of the beginning of June, and there was a stipulation that it should last for not less than twelve months, although it was understood that the unions would be free to approach the companies when the 1936 railway returns were available.
228. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6454, 6478, 6514.
229. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6454, 6478, 6492, 6493.
230. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6514.
231. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 548.
232. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6514.
233. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6524.
234. P. S. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 549.
235. The terms of the Railway Staff National Tribunal decision No. 1 were;

(a) Conciliation Grades

A deduction of 1½% instead of the present 2½% shall be made from all earnings, subject to the following adjustments:-

235 (cont.) Earnings under 40/6d in a full week - No deduction

Earnings of 43/11d up to 44/6d in a full week - 6d deduction

In no case shall any deduction exceed the sum of 3/- in respect of a week.

#### Overtime

The standard rate of time-and-a-quarter for overtime shall be restored in place of the present rate of time-and-an-eighth. Overtime worked between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. will thus be paid at the rate of quarter time extra in addition to the present night rate of time-and-an-eighth, making time-and-three-eighths in all. (This meant that the pre-1931 rate for night overtime of time-and-a-half was not restored, neither were the enhanced rates for night and Sunday duty restored).

#### (b) Clerical, Supervisory and other Salaried Staff paid on a Salary Equivalent Basis

A deduction of 14% instead of the present 24% shall be made on all earnings, provided that in no case shall any deduction exceed the sum of £7.10.0 in respect of a year. (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6548).

236. PRO/RAIL/42/46 p. 17; P. S. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 551.

237. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit p. 551.

238. 1935 Net Revenue £32,921,754. 1936 Net Revenue £35,730,560. But this was still far short of Standard Revenue. The railway companies never achieved this Standard Revenue between 1923 and 1938. From 1st September 1939, wartime financial arrangements took over (Railway Returns).

239. The NUR put forward three claims. ASLEF presented a short programme consisting of five items, (MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6665).

240. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6665.

241. See Chapter 6, 'How the Association dealt with Dissension'.

242. For further details of this establishment see P. S. Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy 1842 - 1929*, London, 1968.

243. The details of this scheme which was suggested to the railway companies during these negotiations were:

"Any employee who has been standing on the maximum of his or her class for three years, and for whom no promotion to a higher class is available shall receive an advance of £10 per annum, and after a further period of three years another advance of £10 per annum. When the employee is promoted to a higher class the total salary, including the stagnation advance or advances, shall not be reduced. For example: when a Class 5 clerk in receipt of the



- 243(cont.)first stagnation advance is promoted to Class 4, he shall remain on the minimum of that Class (£210) for two years after the date of promotion, and then go to the intermediate of Class 4 (£220), and after a further two years he shall go to the maximum of Class 4 (£230); but if he is promoted to Class 4 while he has the second stagnation increase he shall remain four years on the intermediate of Class 4 (£220) before going to the maximum". (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6665).
244. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op.cit. p.252, Barker and Savage op.cit. p. 155.
245. Railway Returns.
246. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6787.
247. The rates which were restored were the enhancements for night duty and Sunday duty and also the overtime rates for night duty. At negotiations since March 1931, some of these rates had been partially restored and, at negotiations the previous August, the daytime overtime rate had been restored, but now they were all restored.

National Wages Board National Agreement  
(119) rate rate restored by Decision No. 3 of RSNT

Night Duty	Time & 1/8th	Time & 1/4
Sunday Duty	Time & 1/3rd	Time & 1/2
Night Overtime	Time & 1/4	Time & 1/2

The NUR were not awarded their minimum wage of 50/- per week, but their more poorly paid members were given some help. Adults whose base rate was less than 45/- were to have a 1/- a week rise, those on a base rate of 45/- were to have a 6d per week rise. There were a few staff with base rates less than 40/-, their rates were raised to 41/- (see P.S. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p.552).

248. The first period of wage cuts was from 13th August, 1928 - 13th May, 1930, a period of nine months and one day; the second period was from 28th March, 1931 to 16th August, 1937, a period of six years four months and nineteen days; seven years, one month and twenty days in all.
249. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6831, 6858 (277). From April 1931, to November, 1936, the cost of living index never rose into the 50's and for a large part of this time it was in the 30's; between October 1936 and October 1937, the rise was steeper than at any time since the early 1920's, it rose 10 points from 48 to 58. (These figures are taken from the Cost of Living index published in the *Ministry of Labour Gazette* - it was based on 1914 = Zero).
250. See MSS. 55/1/CON/32 for 1930 programme.
251. See booklet entitled *Rates of Pay and Conditions of Service of Men and Women Clerks employed by the Railway Executive*, published by the Railway Clerks' Association in October 1948. (The writer of this thesis has a copy of this booklet).

252. Since 1801, census data for the City of London and the London Boroughs confirms this tendency.
253. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6764. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p.563.
254. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6845, 6858.
255. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6858.
256. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6764.
257. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6825, 6846.
258. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6858. It will be apparent from Chapter 4 of this thesis: 'Pension Funds' that the LPTB were reluctant to include these ticket clerks into their pension fund and considered them to be 'wages staff'.
259. Their proposals were: time off in lieu of work on Bank Holidays; that information should be provided respecting the rates of pay of Professional and Technical Staff; payment of the women clerks' scales to women employed at Chiswick, Earls Court and Effra Road and their inclusion in the Administrative Staff; transfer to the Administrative Staff of the Depot Clerks in the Railway Operating and Engineering Departments; a flat rate increase of £20 for all on and above the maximum of Class 5, including Station-masters, Supervisors and P & T Staff; that instead of going from £140 to £150 at age 25, Class 5 Clerks should go to £160 and then proceed by increases of £10 per annum to £220 at the age of 31; that instead of an increase of 2/6d women clerks should have 5/- more at age 30 and a further 5/- at age 31, and that the existing Class 1 rates for women should be increased by 7/6d per week; and that the present scale by which Class 5 Station-masters and Supervisors go from £170 to £200 by annual increments of £10 should start at £180 and go to £190, £200 and £220. All these rates to be increased by £10 for those working in the London area (which was not defined). (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6883).
260. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6897.
261. "In signing this Agreement the representatives of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen wished to place on record their view that the decisions reached, in their considered opinion, do not adequately meet the claims submitted by their Union." (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6938).
262. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6915.
263. This is discussed later in this chapter; it came as a result of Railway Staff National Tribunal Decision No. 6, 18th October 1939.
264. The full text of this Memorandum of Agreement can be found following Executive minute MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6838.
265. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7060.
266. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7163.

267. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7306.
268. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7332.
269. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7347.
270. R. Bell, *History of the British Railways during the War, 1939 - 1945*, London, 1946, pp. 232-233.
271. The railway managers said that there were 77 persons between the ages of 57 and 59 and eighty between 57 and 60, and the Companies would definitely fill the vacancies of those 77 or 80 persons. The 80 persons were classified thus; 13 Special, 53 First, 8 Second and 6 Third. If all the 80 accepted the offer there would be the following promotions; 13 First to Special, 66 Second to First, 74 Third to Second, 80 Fourth to Third, and 50 Fifth to Fourth (30 Fourths were in Class 5 posts) making a total of 283 promotions. There were 300 men in Class 4, most of them over 45 years of age, but less than half of them had been in Class 4 for 10 years - there was one man of 51 and 30 men of 50 years of age. If only half of the 80 accepted the offer, the Companies might look at another batch. See MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7084.
272. MSS. 55/1/CON/42; See MSS. 55B/EC/19/6845 for the draft version of the 1938 programme and MSS. 55/1/CON/43 for the approved short programme with the three added items. At MSS. 55G/5/PCS/2 is the Memorandum of Agreement, which gives the basic pay and conditions of salaried staff between the two World Wars. It can be used to demonstrate the expectations of the Association's Executive and members.
273. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/6710.
274. MSS. 55/1/CON/14.
275. The NUR had six proposals;
1. A minimum weekly wage of 50/- for wages grades
  2. Spreadover turns.
  3. Twelve days annual holiday.
  4. Abolition of extended rosters.
  5. Minimum of four hours pay for Sunday duty for all grades.
  6. Weekly half-holiday (always to be on a Saturday).

Item 1 was to apply to wage grades only. Spread-over turns, also called split turns, are turns consisting of two periods of work with a fairly long gap of rest time between. Railway workers are often called on to work them when they work trains catering for rush hour workers. An example would be to work 0730 hours to 1100 hours and then 1500 hours to 1900 hours. They are not as unpopular now as they appear to have been in the 1930's, because railway workers are now paid much better for working them. Item 5 was meant to apply to all grades.

- 275 (cont.) ASLEF had five proposals;
1. Improved rates of pay.
  2. Twelve days annual holiday.
  3. A minimum of 8 hours pay at time-and-a-half for every signing-on on a Sunday.
  4. Abolition of extended rosters.
  5. Extension of the London Area. (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/6982)
276. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/6982.
277. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7001.
278. This was broken down as; Improvement in Salaries, £1,318,000; Extension of London Area, £6,000; Extra Payment for Duty Between 10 pm and 4 am, £72,000; Forty-hour Week, £1,699,000; Annual Holidays, £167,000; An estimate of the appointment of unappointed staff was not obtainable. (See MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7107).
279. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/6982.
280. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7107.
281. The actual figure is £28,984,344.
282. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7128.
283. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7128.
284. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 560. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7211; MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7232. The Railway management's case for resisting the union's proposals can be found in RAIL/424/11 (Part 1), 'Memorandum of Special Meeting of General Managers' 12th January 1939.
285. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. pp. 560-561.
286. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/6838.
287. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. pp. 560-561; MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7323, 7346.
288. Mowat op. cit. p. 625.
289. Mowat op. cit. p. 631.
290. C.L. Mowat op. cit. p. 640.
291. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 561.
292. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 552.
293. MSS. 55/1/CON/45.
294. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7323, 7346.
295. These minutes can be found following MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7307, the meeting took place on 3rd May 1939.

296. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7369; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 1) correspondence between ASLEF and the Railway Companies between 1st - 3rd August 1939, also PRO/RAIL/424/11, (Part 2).
297. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7639.
298. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p 562.
299. The Railway Clearing House number taking staff were located at junctions all around Britain. They monitored the movements of wagons, carriages and tarpaulins throughout the railway network. The Association worked hard to have them included in the salaried grades (See Bagwell (The Railway Clearing House) op. cit. pp. 174 - 187.
300. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7369, PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 1) memorandum dated 17th August 1939.
301. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 562; MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7384; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 2) (Part 2 of this file is devoted to the threatened ASLEF strike).
302. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7384; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 2).
303. Bell op. cit. p. 71; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 2), Page 3 of a memorandum on 'Labour Matters' dated 28th August 1939.
304. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7384.
305. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. p. 587; Bell op. cit. P. 222; PRO/RAIL/424/11 (Part 4).
306. Bagwell (The Railwaymen) op. cit. pp. 573-597, R. Bell op. cit. pp. 10 - 13, and pp. 19- 22.
307. Routh op. cit. table p. 90.

### Chapter 3 Parliamentary and Electoral Activities: Notes

1. Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party, 1910-1924* Oxford, 1974 (Paperback 1986), pp. 91-106.
2. David E. Martin, Unpublished monograph on George Lathan to be published in Dictionary of Labour Biography, 1985, p. 3.
3. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5863
4. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5375
5. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1042
6. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1151
7. H. A. Clegg, Alan Fox, and A. F. Thompson, *A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, Volume I: 1889 - 1910*, Oxford, 1964 (1977) pp. 413-418.
8. Clegg, Fox and Thompson op. cit. pp. 418-420; Hugh Armstrong Clegg, *A History of British Trade unions since 1889, Volume II: 1911-1933*, Oxford, 1985 (Paperback 1987) pp. 211-218.
9. Clegg op. cit. p. 223.
10. *Railway Clerk*, October 1913; Adrian Tranter, *The Railway Clerks' Association; its origins and history to 1921*, Unpublished Ph. D., Cambridge, 1979, p. 190.
11. TSSA Annual Report 1976 p. 150, MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1035.
12. Tranter op. cit. p. 191.
13. I have used Sir Thomas Erskine May's *Treatise on the Privileges and Usages of Parliament* as a general reference on parliamentary procedures. 'Erskine May' is periodically re-edited and brought up to date. The most recent is the 21st edition, published in 1989 and edited by C. J. Boulton. Two other relevant editions are the 12th, 1917 and the 13th, 1924, they were both edited by T. Lonsdale Webster. All editions were published in London.
14. *Railway Clerk*, July & August 1909; Following MSS. 55B/EC/4/1950 Memorandum marked 'Confidential' p. 5.
15. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/979, 1079
16. Following MSS. 55B/EC/4?1950 Memorandum marked 'Confidential' pp. 4 & 5; Adrian Tranter op. cit. pp. 129 & 134.
17. *Railway Service Journal*, March, 1929, p. 94.
18. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1031(j); Adrian Tranter op. cit. pp. 162 & 163.
19. There is a thorough discussion of the problems of land acquisition for railway construction in *Railways and Victorian Cities*, John R Kellet, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969.

- 19 (cont.) (Paperback, 1979). This work discusses land acquisition at the point where problems were most acute.
20. The railway companies' pension funds are discussed in chapter 4 of this thesis.
21. O. R. McGregor, *Divorce in England: A Centenary Study*, Heinemann, London, 1957.
22. These examples are taken from one of a series of booklets issued by the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company (LMS) between 1923 and 1939. They had a limited circulation and gave brief details of proposed private legislation which would have affected the LMS. They cover most of the sessions between these years, and include, as well as railway bills, details of such local authorities' bills as were considered of interest to railway managers. Local authorities are the other large source of private legislation. These booklets can be found under the following references:
- PRO/RAIL/423/1 covers the 1923 session  
 PRO/RAIL/423/2 covers the 1924 session  
 PRO/RAIL/423/3 covers the 1925 session  
 PRO/RAIL/423/4 covers the 1926 session  
 PRO/RAIL/423/5 covers the 1927 session  
 PRO/RAIL/423/6 covers the 1930 session  
 PRO/RAIL/423/7 covers the 1931-1932  
 sessions  
 PRO/RAIL/423/8 covers the 1937-1938  
 sessions
23. Erskine May (21st Edition) op. cit. pp. 929 and 930.
24. Lord Campion, *Introduction to the Procedures of the House of Commons*, London, 1958, p. 296.
25. Private Bill Ledgers in the House of Lords Record Office.
26. Information supplied orally from the Private Bills Office of the House of Commons, June 1991.
27. F.W.S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1918 - 1949*, London, 1969 p. 45.
28. P.S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, London, 1963;  
 MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1942
29. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1942, 1981
30. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1994
31. Craig op. cit. pp. 248 & 249. After the first World War, the wartime coalition government decided to continue in existence and devised a signal to demonstrate to the electorate particular candidates in the postwar election who supported the coalition. This was necessary as such candidates stood for different

- 31(cont.) political parties, and was referred to derisively as the 'coupon'.
32. D. Butler and A. Sloman, *British Political Facts 1900-1979*, London 1980; J.M. Bellamy and J Saville eds., *Dictionary of Labour Biography Volume 2*, London, 1974, article on G.J. Wardle by P.S. Bagwell.
33. See Chapter 2, section on recognition negotiations and PRO/CAB/21/169.
34. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5375, para. 28
35. Craig, op.cit. p.45.
36. M. Stenton and S. Lees eds., ~~Who's Who of British Members of Parliament~~, Volume III (1919 - 1945) Volume III, Brighton, 1979.
37. Craig, op.cit. p. 248.
38. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5325 page 4, para 17
39. Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945*, London, 1975 (Paperback 1977) pp.46-47; Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, London, 1963, pp.196-199; James Hinton, *Labour and Socialism: A History of the British Labour Movement 1867 -1974*, Brighton, 1983, pp. 148 - 149
40. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5375 .
41. The duration of a Parliament had been reduced from seven to five years by the Parliament Act of 1911, so an election would normally have been expected in or about 1915.
42. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1707
43. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1663 (c)
44. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1500
45. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1664
46. Many writers discuss this change in public attitudes; there is a good summary of it in Keith Middlemas, *Politics in British Society, The Experience of the British System since 1911*, London, 1980, pp. 94 - 119
47. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1707
48. MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1729 (d), 1764 (b), 1838, 1855, 1858 (e)
49. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3015
50. It was unfortunate that this resolution had such a memorable number because the incident was getting on some of the Executive's nerves and the resolution's number helped to fix it in their minds. The debate at the annual conference can



- 50(cont)be found at MSS.55B/1/CON/19. This conference also resolved that any member of the permanent staff could be sponsored but while the Annual Conference proposed, the Executive Committee disposed.
51. The reasons for this ruling are detailed in a lengthy Political Sub-Committee report presented to the Executive Committee on 22nd February, 1932, see MSS.55B/1/EC/15/5375. Briefly, the General Secretary's and the Chief Assistant Secretary's work was mainly with railway managers and government departments, and it was held to be an advantage in it for both to be Members of Parliament. The argument did not apply to other head office staff, and was not accepted by the whole of the Executive, as the debate on the report demonstrates.
52. MSS.55B/1/EC/7/3103. W. Stott was third in line in the Association's hierarchy. It ran: A.G. Walkden, G. Lathan, then W. Stott. G. Ridley came rather lower down in pecking order.
53. MSS.55B/1/EC/8/3162 (f)
54. MSS.55B/1/EC/16/5687
55. Craig, op.cit. p.321.
56. MSS.55B/1/EC/19/6595 (a)
57. See the note prior to MSS.55B/1/EC/18/6521. This was at the Executive Committee held on Sunday 19th July, 1936.
58. MSS.55B/1/EC/8/3319
59. MSS.55B/1/EC/8/3168
60. MSS.55B/1/EC/7/3103
61. MSS.55B/1/EC/7/3015, 3057, 3103, MSS.55B/1/EC/15/5375
62. Paragraph 10 of MSS.55B/1/EC/7/3103, paragraph 9 of MSS.55B/1/EC/7/3105. The comments made at these meetings demonstrate not only an awareness amongst the members of the Political Fund Sub-Committee, but also how tactful they thought they needed to be.
63. MSS.55B/1/EC/16/5863
64. H. Pelling *Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910*, London, 1967, pp. 184 - 186.
65. *The Times House of Commons 1935*, London, 1935, p.84
66. MSS.55B/1/EC/8/3319
67. *Times House of Commons, 1929*, London, 1929, p. 88.
68. MSS.55B/1/EC/8/3248, 3249; MSS.55B/1/EC/16/5649 (c)

69. Craig, op.cit. p. 140 ; Stenton and S. Lees eds. *Who's Who of British Members of Parliament* Volume III (1919-1945) Brighton, 1979.
70. Craig, op.cit. p. 248 & 140; A.J.P. Taylor *English History: 1914 - 1945*, Oxford, 1965 (Paperback 1976) p. 341 n.3.
71. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4746
72. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3103
73. *Times House of Commons 1935* op.cit. p. 84.
74. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4760 (8)
75. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5325
76. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5584 for A. G. Walkden;  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5311 for G. Lathan
77. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5375. The reservation to be entered against this document as a guide to the apportionment of tasks at the Association's Head Office in 1930 is to do with its polemical aspect, that is, its presentation of job descriptions to support the argument that both the General Secretary and the Chief Assistant Secretary should ideally be Members of Parliament, but that no other official should be. However, the account would have to be acceptable to the permanent staff in general, and as the Executive Committee decided to have the report printed and circulated to the branches it is to be assumed that the account was substantially unexceptionable.
78. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5375
79. MSS. 55B/1/CON/39-40; MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6489
80. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6330
81. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5649 para 6 .
82. Formerly known as the Political Fund Sub-Committee.
83. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5649
84. (See Hansard Volume 174 column 832, 1924; also Chapter 4; 'Pension Funds' for an explanation of why this action would count as 'Association Duties')
85. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5649; MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5375
86. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3102. The Dail legislated for a country with a population of less than 3,000,000 in 1930, whilst the British Parliament performed the same service for a population of 46,052,000 and the sun had not yet set on the British Empire.
87. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6595

88. *Times House of Commons*, 1935 op. cit. pp. 48, 87, & 125.
89. *Times House of Commons 1935* op. cit. pp. 141, 132, 133, 100, 101, 48, & 66
90. *Times House of Commons*, 1935 op. cit. pp. 123, 87, 92, & 109.
91. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5649, paragraph 6.

## Chapter 4 The RCA and the Railway Pension Funds: Notes

1. Employees were normally paid back only their own contributions if they left for a respectable reason. This meant that payments made to the fund on their behalf helped to guarantee the payments for other beneficiaries. Employees dismissed for misconduct were usually paid back their own contributions but the North British and Glasgow and South Western companies returned half the contributions only, at the discretion of the fund's committee. An employee dismissed for fraud usually lost his contributions. Sometimes a part or even the whole of his contributions were paid to a dependent. If the employee had been a member of their fund for more than ten years, the Great Western returned the whole of the member's contributions.
2. The words 'pension' and 'superannuation' do not mean the same thing. A pension is a payment, not necessarily to an old person, after his retirement. To superannuate means to declare unfit for further use; an early variant of the word meant having survived a year. Despite their different origins, modern usage makes little distinction between the two words. In this chapter, the term 'pension funds' is used for the funds established by railway companies for their clerical staff.
3. Cd. 5349, *Report of the Departmental Committee on Superannuation and similar funds of the Railway Companies* (1910). pp. 39 - 43.
4. Ibid; pp. 39 - 43.
5. Ibid; pp. 39 - 43., P.S. Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy 1842 - 1922*, London, 1968. pp. 162-169.
6. Cd. 5349 pp. 39 - 43.
7. The London Traffic Combine's pension fund was not established by statute, but some of its staff were in the Railway Clearing System's fund. (See ILO Studies & Reports Series A, No. 33 (1930)).
8. A.G. Walkden, the Association's General Secretary, in his evidence to the Departmental Committee of Enquiry into Railway Superannuation Schemes (see Cd. 5484 p.12) said that his membership was compelled to belong to one of sixteen superannuation funds. Fourteen main-line railway companies had their own funds. The other main-line companies used the Railway Clearing System's fund. Most of the Association's members working for the London Traffic Combine (T.O.T.) were recruited in their own fund, the Omnibus, Railway and Equipment Companies Staff Superannuation Fund, referred to by the Association as the O.R.T. & E. Fund.
9. *Railway Clerk*, December, 1910. For National Insurance exemption see *The Railway Clerk*, November 1911, p. 231.
10. After MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1950 on page 26 of the E.C. minute book.
11. Cd. 5349 p. 36

12. Cd. 5349 pp. 1 - 20 and Cd. 5484, *Evidence submitted to the Departmental Committee on Superannuation and similar funds of the Railway Companies* (1911).
13. Cd. 5484 pp. 48 - 49.
14. Cd. 5484 p. 49.
15. Cd. 5349 pp. 35 - 36.
16. MSS. 55B/1/EC/2/1018.
17. See Chapter 2, 'Improved Salaries in 1919'.
18. MSS. 55B. 1/EC/5/2380, MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2626
19. P.S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770*, London 1974, p. 240.
20. Ministry of Transport Act (1919). T.C. Barker and C.I. Savage, *An Economic History of British Transport*, Barker and CI Savage, London 1974 p. 147
21. Cd. 5349 pp. 39 - 43.
22. Cd. 5349 p. 41.
23. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2626, MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2871(a) and MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2959
24. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3007
25. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3035 and MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3078.
26. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3078. for the text of the paragraph which was inserted into the Bill.
27. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3153. for the text of the paragraph which was inserted into this Bill.
28. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3115.
29. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3115 and MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3153.
30. B. B. Gilbert, *British Social Policy 1914 - 1939*, London 1970, pp. 235 - 254.
31. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2959
32. Cd. 5349 p. 26.
33. MSS. 55/1/CON/24.
34. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2937 (b).
35. Railway Act (1921) (11 & 12 Geo. Vc. 55) Part I Section 3 - (2).

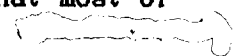
36. The Great Western was not only the largest company in its group, it was the only one with an independent pension fund. Of the thirteen others, the LMS group had the London and North Western, the Midland, the Lancashire and Yorkshire, the Glasgow and South-Western, and the Caledonian; it also had some employees in the Railway Clearing System Fund; the LNER had the Great Central and the North British; and the Southern had the South-Eastern and Chatham, the London Brighton and South Coast, and the London and South-Western. See also MSS. 55B/1/EC/6394(a)
37. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3115
38. PRO/RAIL/101. This is the minute-book of several sub-committees of the LMS Board. It includes the minutes of the meetings of this sub-committee. PRO/RAIL/424/7 also contains accounts of some of the meetings of this sub-committee, the funds were:  
The London and North Western,  
The Lancashire and Yorkshire,  
The Midland,  
The Railway Clearing House,  
The Caledonian, The Glasgow and South-Western.
39. PRO/RAIL/424/7. Report of the Sub-committee dated 17 December 1923.
40. PRO/RAIL/424/7 .
41. PRO/RAIL/424/7. (The question of supplements to pensions funds to help annuitants cope with wartime and immediate post-war inflation is considered later in this chapter).
42. See MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3153 for details of Supplementary funds.
43. PRO/RAIL/424/7.
44. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3291.
45. PRO/RAIL/418/202. 20th July, 1923 pp. 5 - 8. This figure of 7,426 was further broken down - 5,679 of them were men and 1,747 were women; 4,397 were members of a wages pension fund, 3,029 had no pension provision and 2,730 were over 50 years old. The Association's figures may be for those of the above who were members of the Association.
46. This 'Ex Gratia' pension was based on the grade of the clerk concerned. The column on the right shows the percentage of clerks in each of these grades, when a general re-classification was undertaken in 1919-1920. It would be expected that most of this group of clerks would be in the lower grades.   
(See Table 8, overleaf).

Table 8.

Class 5	10/- per week	57.2%
Class 4	12/6 per week	20.0%
Class 3	15/- per week	11.1%
Class 2	17/6 per week	5.4%
Class 1	20/- per week	2.9%
Special Class	22/6 per week	2.6%

(See PRO/RAIL/418/202 20 July, 1923 pp. 5-8)  
 (See following MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2378).

47. PRO/RAIL/418/202 December, 1923 p. 34
48. PRO/RAIL/418/202 14th May, 1924 p. 52
49. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3472.
50. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3315, 3357, 3423 and 3443 (c).
51. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3368, 3406 (c), and 3423. Mr Romeril, the Association's first M.P. devoted his maiden speech in the House of Commons to defending the Bill. (See Chapter 3, Parliamentary Activities, 'The Association's campaign to provide parliamentary seats for its members'.
52. PRO/RAIL/1007/630
53. PRO/RAIL/1007/630
54. British Labour Statistics Historical Abstract 1886 - 1968, London, 1971; for the actual rate of inflation during this period. There are also some figures at Appendix II.
55. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2015.
56. The LNWR grants were based on the following formula: one sixtieth of retiring salary for each year of membership of the fund. If this was based on the salary scales which were current in the early part of 1919 - before salary negotiations - then the maximum grant would have been two thirds of the retiring salary; if the salary scale used was that in force in the latter half of 1919, then the maximum grant was three fifths of the retiring salary. (MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2380).
57. PRO/RAIL/630.
58. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3153.
59. There is a report on these supplementary funds following MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3153. It is dated 21 June 1923.
60. PRO/RAIL/1007/630. See a report of a sub-committee dated 26th June, 1924.
61. PRO/RAIL/1007/630, MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3297, 3315, 3357, 3368.
62. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3368, MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3406.

63. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3423.
64. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3443 (c).
65. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3802, 3810.
66. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3854.
67. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3947.
68. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3968 (a).
69. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4019.
70. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4034.
71. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4235.
72. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3947.
73. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6280 (c).
74. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6316 (e).
75. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6354 (c).
76. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7344.
77. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6621.
78. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6809.
79. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6544.
80. P. S. Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy 1842-1922*, London, 1968, pp. 282 - 283.
81. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4020.
82. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4206 (c).
83. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4235 (b).
84. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4235 (b).
85. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4291.
86. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4305 (a).
87. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4382 (a).
88. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4402 (a)
89. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4785.
90. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4839.
91. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5041.



92. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5106 (a).
93. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5128 (b).
94. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6393 (e).
95. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6469.
96. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6544.
97. MSS. 55B/1/CON/41.
98. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6487.
99. PRO/RAIL/424/7. See especially the memorandum to the President of LMS, dated 20 October 1930; and the letter to Sir Herbert Walker, the General Manager of the Southern Railway, dated 3 July 1934.
100. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6607.
101. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
102. Bagwell (The Railway Clearing House) op. cit. pp. 270 - 273 and pp. 282 - 283.
103. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2378.
104. Bagwell (The Railway Clearing House) op. cit. pp. 270 - 273 and pp. 282 - 283.
105. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6354(g), MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6621(d).
106. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7344.
107. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
108. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6809.
109. Railway Clearing System Act (1940-1941) (4 & 5 Geo. VI) See also Note 162, below.
110. T. C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport*, Vol. 2 pp. 137 - 191.
111. Barker and Robbins op. cit. pp. 270-311.
112. Barker and Robbins op. cit. pp. 504-517.
113. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5866.
114. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6106 (f).
115. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6263 (a).
116. *ILO Studies and Reports, Series A No. 33, The London Traffic Combine* pp. 142 and 152. The funds which catered for most railway clerks were established by statute in the nineteenth century,

- 116(cont.) when this was the only way to establish such an enterprise. The earliest railway pension fund was set up in 1854. As late as 1909, the alternative to private legislation was to register a pension fund under the Friendly Societies Act (1890), but the maximum annuity allowed was £52, which made this method impractical for railway pension funds which catered for white-collar staff. (Cd. 5349 p.27).
117. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6607.
118. (ILO Report, op. cit. p.143.
119. Under the LMS pension fund, on his final salary of £200 he would be paid a pension of £120 and a lump sum of £300. For the male average pay (£186/£185) see Guy Routh, *Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-79*, London 1965, 1980, pp. 120 & 121 table 2.27.
120. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6607.
121. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5330, 5355.
122. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6669.
123. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6684.
124. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5942 (4), following MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6004, MSS. 55b/1/EC/17/6107 (b).
125. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6004. See earlier in this chapter for an explanation of the 'money value' system.
126. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6004, MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6107 (b).
127. In 1912, when the fund was established, the Association employed only thirteen people. By 1933 there had been a considerable increase, but there were never more than 100 employees in the period between the two World Wars. In pension terms this would be a very small fund. It would be difficult for an actuary to estimate the pattern of claims for such a fund.
128. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6107 (b).
129. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5942 (4).
130. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6033, 6107 (b).
131. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/1965.
132. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6655, 6586 (4), 6872.
133. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7111 (4(b)), 7141 (8).
134. See earlier in this chapter and MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6394.
135. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4206 (a).
136. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4235.

137. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4275 (a), 4291.
138. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4335.
139. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5041 (c).
140. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6201 (h), 6280 (b).
141. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6316 (b)
142. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6293, 6354.
143. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6394.
144. See Appendix VI.
145. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6495.
146. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6607.
147. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6640, 6669. See later in this chapter, where the change in policy by the Association on higher pension funds is discussed. The change in policy was confirmed at the 1936 Annual Conference.
148. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6909.
149. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6929. MS. 55/1/CON/43.
150. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6909.
151. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6934.
152. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/6981.
153. MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7344, 7389.
154. At the time of Bell's publication (see note 155 below) this location had an obscurity it has since lost.
155. R. Bell, *History of the British Railways during the war 1939 - 45*, London, 1946.
156. For details of the benefits and contributions of this fund see Great Western Railway Superannuation Fund Act, 1941. As explained in the text, the new GWR fund and the new Railway Clearing System Fund were very similar and were established within a few days of each other. The benefits offered were exactly similar. The retiring age for men was 60, for women 55.
157. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3115.
158. For a discussion of this see P.S. Bagwell, *The Transport Revolution from 1770*. London 1974 pp. 247 - 249.
159. Net revenue is obtained by subtracting expenditure from gross revenue. Railway companies in the 1920's and 1930's considered expenditure to be a fixed amount and to vary directly with the

- 159(cont.)size of the network. So the amount of surplus compared to the total amount of revenue will show how economically efficient a company was.
160. See Chapter 5; The General Strike.
161. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
162. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3267.
163. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3297.
164. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3298.
165. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3333.
166. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
167. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3368, MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3423, 3443(e)
168. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3472 (b), PRO/RAIL/390/351.
169. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
170. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3516.
171. Cd. 5349 pp.51 and 52.
172. A line conference is one confined to delegates from a single railway line or company.
173. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3616.
174. Bentley B. Gilbert, *The Evolution of National Insurance in Britain*, London, 1966 pp. 159 - 232; *British Social Policy 1914-1939*, London, 1970(1973) pp. 235 - 254.
175. *The Railway Clerk*, 15 September 1911, 15 November 1911. There are numerous references to this attitude of the Association throughout this period. See: MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2600, 2657, MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3351, MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4460, MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5823, MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6748. Up to 1924, if not later, this attitude was shared by the NUR and ASLEF, see MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3351.
176. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3613; MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3647; MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3647.
177. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
178. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3692.
179. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
180. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3722.
181. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
182. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3766.

- 183. PRO/RAIL/390/351.
- 184. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3787.
- 185. PRO/RAIL/390/351.

Comparison of Benefits

LNER PROPOSALS	LMS BENEFITS	
Pension based on	One third of average salary plus a third of last seven year average salary	Half of final salary
Plus a lump sum based on	One year's final salary	One and a half year's final salary
If the member died before pensionable age	Not less than three months' current salary and not more than one year's current salary.	Not less than one year's current salary and not more than 1½ year's current salary.

- 186. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3810.
- 187. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3854.
- 188. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3934.
- 189. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4100.
- 190. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4275.
- 191. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4335.
- 192. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4595.
- 193. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4682, MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/4914(b), 4965, 5022.
- 194. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5056.
- 195. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5106 (b), 5128 (a).
- 196. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5130.
- 197. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5169.
- 198. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5355.
- 199. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5355.
- 200. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5284, MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5744(a), 5678.

201. PRO/RAIL/390/351, MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5274, 5434 (a).
202. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/6106 (c).
203. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6201.
204. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6263 (a).
205. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6354 (f).
206. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6394.
207. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18 6469.
208. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6487.
209. MSS. 55/1/CON/41.
210. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6495.
211. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6544
212. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6607, 6669, 6863.
213. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6607, 6822.
214. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6880.
215. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6929.
216. MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6934.
217. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7064, PRO/RAIL/390/351.
218. MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/7210, MSS. 55B/1/EC/21/7267, 7304, 7344 (a),  
PRO/RAIL/390/351.
219. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5528 on p.239 of the E. C. minute book.
220. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5528 on p.239 of E. C. minute book.
221. Here is a short list of some of the other issues which were the  
subject of negotiation from time to time. The agreements which  
were reached form the basis of the conditions of work of the  
railways' white-collar staff at the present time.

Conditions of service for night workers,  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2712, 2719, MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3386(c), 3443 (b),  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3500:

Definition of 'Home Station' for relief clerks' expenses.  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2822, MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3438, MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3676,  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3713, MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3876.

Special overtime for station-masters.  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3874(g), MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4073, 4177.

221(cont.)Booking-on for more than one turn of duty in a day.  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2822, MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3718.

Travelling time. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2822.

Station masters' "on-call" on Sundays.  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2822.

Clerks on sea-going vessels. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2822

Temporary relief for station-masters.  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2822.

Expenses for relief clerks. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2896, 2992 (a),  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3874 (a).

Allowances for clerks transferred to the sea-side in the summer.  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3383, MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3617 (b).

Higher grade payments. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3386 (b),  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3491, 3513 (b).

Aggregation Allowance. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3422, 3439 (a),  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3485, 3513 (a), 3585,  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4217 (a).

Clerks' Sunday duty. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4050, 4072,  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4347, 4556, MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4639.

Compensatory leave for time worked on bank-holidays.  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1603 (c), following  
MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5528.

Chapter 5 The Association, the General Strike and its Aftermath: Notes

1. It also spent 11% of its 1927 total funds in 1927 (see Appendix III).
2. This was over the two years 1926 and 1927. At the end of 1925 there were 66,130 members; 1926, 54,795; 1927, 50,208 (see Appendix III).
3. A. Tranter, 'The Railway Clerks' Association; its origins and history to 1921,' Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1979, p. 279. P.S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, London, 1963, pp. 297 & 311.
4. Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, London, 1965 (Penguin Paperback 1967) p.84.
5. C.L. Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars: 1918 - 1940*, London, 1955 (1966).
6. Ibid. p. 1
7. D.H. Aldcroft, *The Inter-War Economy, 1919-1939*, London, 1970. pp. 270 - 271 & 244.
8. Ibid pp. 243 - 251; William Ashworth, *An Economic History of England 1870 - 1939*, London, Paperback 1976) pp. 285 - 320.
9. In connection with the a proposed Triple Alliance strike, the Executive called a special delegate conference, held meetings in the main railway centres, and circularised all the Association's branches. Although there was no support, the Executive was still prepared to discuss whether it should exercise its right to call the Association out on strike, before hearing that the original strike was called off. It is also relevant that the Executive's agreement to join the Industrial Alliance was not endorsed by the next Annual Conference and that the membership at large was not consulted when the Association decided to join in the 1925 coal embargo and the General Strike. All these topics are more fully discussed later in this chapter.
10. See Tranter op.cit. p. 279. P.S. Bagwell op.cit. pp. 297 & 311.
11. MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2457.
12. MSS. 55/1/CON/21.
13. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5863.
14. *The Railway Service Journal* February, 1926, p.41 (quoting the National Wages Board Report). The railway authorities reclassified its clerical workforce after the wage negotiations of 1919 and prior to the 1921 Railway Act. See MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2278, 2279, 2286, 2329, 2378, MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2516.
15. TSSA Annual Report 1976. p. 150.
16. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5863.
17. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5863.



18. MSS. 55B/1/EC/17/5863.
19. Mowat op. cit. pp. 17-25; A.J.P. Taylor, *English History 1914-1945*, (Penguin Edition) Harmondsworth, 1976, pp. 187-196.
20. MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2148.
21. William Ashworth op.cit. pp. 145, 257.
22. Ibid pp. 257, 322.
23. Ibid p. 290.
24. Aldcroft op.cit p. 147.
25. Ibid p. 151.
26. Ibid p. 151-154.
27. Most histories of the period mention both these events but see Arthur Marwick, *The Deluge*, London, 1965. p. 270 for coal; p. 169 for railways.
28. The best documented of these is the common user system for wagons, sheets and ropes. See: P.S. Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy*, London, 1968. pp. 273 - 279.
29. Mowat op. cit. pp. 31 -36.
30. P.S. Bagwell, 'The Triple Industrial Alliance 1913-1922', in A. Briggs and J. Saville eds. *Essays in Labour History*, London, 1971.
31. Mowat op. cit. p. 34; Margaret Morris, *The General Strike*, London, 1976. pp. 121 & 122.
32. P.S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, London, 1963, pp. 454-459.
33. The Emergency Powers Act was introduced on 22nd October and received its Royal Assent on 27th October. It allowed a declaration of a State of Emergency, during which <sup>the Government</sup> could make regulations under Orders in Council; it could also set up Courts of Summary Jurisdiction.
34. Mowat op. cit. pp. 119-121.
35. Bagwell op.cit. (The Railwaymen) p. 461.
36. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2666, 2668; MSS. 55/CON/22.
37. Mowat op.cit. p. 121; Bagwell op.cit (The Railwaymen) p. 461.
38. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2671.
39. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2672.
40. MSS. 55B/1/EC/6/2673.

41. Mowat op.cit. pp. 122-123; Bagwell op.cit. (The Railwaymen) pp. 462-463.
42. Mowat op.cit. pp. 123-124.
43. Bagwell op.cit. (The Railwaymen) pp. 419-423.
44. Mowat op. cit. pp. 156-158 & 290.
45. There is a good discussion of this decision in Sidney Pollard, *The Gold Standard and Employment Policies between the Wars*, London, 1970.
46. There was a drop of 10% in the volume of coal sales between 1924 and 1928: see Derek H. Aldcroft, *The Inter-War Economy: Britain 1919 - 1939*, London, 1970 (Paperback 1973) p. 154
47. Pollard op. cit. p.164 Note 2, quoting A.W. Kiddy in the *Bankers' Magazine*, April 1925.
48. J.M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of Mr. Churchill*, London, 1925.
49. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3695. There is a draft of the constitution and conditions of membership of the Alliance under this reference. The Alliance would have included trade unions which catered:  
  
'For workpeople engaged in all forms of Transport (railways, docks, waterways, road, sea or air) Engineering, Shipbuilding, Iron and Steel production, Mining and all forms of Power production and distribution.'
50. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3664, 3689, 3693.
51. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3689. Relations between the NUR and ASLEF were strained, because the NUR had refused to participate in a strike called by ASLEF in January, 1924. (see Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) pp. 435-437.
52. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3694.
53. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3702.
54. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3800.
55. See 'Wage Negotiations', Chapter 2.
56. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3781; Bagwell op.cit (the Railwaymen) p. 466.
57. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3809, 3818; MSS. 55/CON/28; MSS. 55B/1/CON/21.
58. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4251.
59. Keynes op. cit. pp. 20 - 24.
60. Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) pp. 466-467; also G.A. Phillips, *The General Strike*, London, 1976. p. 52.

61. Mowat op. cit. p. 291.
62. Phillips op. cit. p. 52; Mowat op. cit. p. 292; Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) p. 467
63. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3699.
64. Phillips op. cit. p. 56.
65. Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) pp. 467 & 468. (The details of how the embargo was to be enforced are given here).
66. Phillips op. cit. p. 52; Mowat op. cit. pp. 260 & 292.
67. Phillips op. cit. pp. 61-66; Mowat op. cit. pp. 294-296.
68. R. A. Florey, *The General Strike of 1926*, London, 1980, pp. 17-20.
69. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3701.
70. A good illustration of this is the article on the front page of issue No. 1 of *The British Gazette*, published on the 5th May 1926 entitled the "The British Gazette" and its objects. 'The British Gazette' was the newspaper published by the Government during the strike.
71. The chairman of the Royal Commission was Sir Herbert Samuel, a former Liberal Cabinet Minister.
72. Mowat op. cit. pp. 297-298.
73. Phillips op. cit. pp. 32 & 33.
74. There are reports of this three-day conference in the numerous published accounts of the General Strike (see note 84). There are also accounts in the general histories of the period. See Mowat op. cit. pp. 301-305.
75. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/2870.
76. Margaret Morris, *The General Strike*, London, 1976. pp. 217-238; Phillips op. cit. pp. 112-116.
77. Mowat op. cit. p. 301. The vote was 3,653,527 to 49,911.
78. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3888.
79. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3889.
80. Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) p. 470.
81. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3889.
82. Phillips op. cit. p. 118; C.L. Mowat op. cit. p. 305.
83. Phillips op. cit. pp. 124 & 125; Mowat op. cit. pp. 306 & 307.

84. The General Strike is the most commented-on industrial episode between the two wars. Books consulted for this thesis fall into two groups - written before and after 1966, when the rule on the secrecy of government documents was reduced to thirty years. Books prior to that date could not benefit from the scrutiny of Cabinet minutes and other government papers. On the other hand, they were more likely to draw upon interviews with protagonists. Later books, notably by Margaret Morris and the book edited by Jeffrey Skelley, also draw on testimony from people involved but their scope for so doing is necessarily limited. The best early work is usually considered to be: W.H. Crook, *General Strike*, North Carolina, 1931. A more popular and readable account, published some time later, is Julian Symons, *The General Strike*, London, 1957. Several books were published in 1976, the fiftieth anniversary of the Strike. One is *The General Strike 1926*, edited by Jeffrey Skelley, London, 1976. This is a Communist work and contains contributions not available elsewhere; it includes the account of railway clerks on strike in Bradford by D.A. Wilson, referred to at note 79. Margaret Morris, *The General Strike*, gives an authoritative picture of the event. For researchers it has the disadvantage of not being a straightforwardly chronological account. The best general reference for research is: G.A. Phillips, *The General Strike* London, 1976. Patrick Renshaw, *The General Strike*, London, 1975, is significant because, although most historians consider the General Strike to have been a mistake, which did nothing for the miners, this work also considers that a coal embargo would have been more sensible. There are two works which seek to establish that the Strike was a notable battle in the 'class war': C. Farman, *May 1926 The General Strike Britain's Aborted Revolution*, London, 1974; and R.A. Florey, *The General Strike of 1926*, London, 1980. Florey also gives an account of the history of the idea of a general strike.
85. Crook op. cit. p. 395
86. See the lists of suspended staff following MSS.55B/1/EC/10/3896 on pp.236-239 of the E.C. minute book. The LMS suspended eight station-masters, one controller, one locomotive inspector, one supervisory foreman, and one district foreman; the Southern suspended only one station-master, one goods agent, and a chief dock foreman; the Great Western suspended sixteen station-masters, one controller and seventeen inspectors; the LNER's list included eleven station-masters, four district inspectors and a chief controller. (Morris op. cit., p. 30).
87. PRO/RAIL/235/451. The traditional stereotype of a General Strike volunteer is of a student, but many would have been unemployed men who, after only nine days training, would not have been suitable for railway work.
88. *The Railway Service Journal*, June 1926, pp. 198-205; Jeffrey Skelley ed. *The General Strike*, London, 1976 pp. 352-359. In chapter 6 it is reported that in October 1929 the Association's Executive removed D.A. Wilson from the post of organising secretary of the Bradford branch, because he would not stop his Minority Movement activities. He was Honorary Secretary of the Railway Clerks' Minority Group.

89. Phillips op. cit. p. 211 quoting the TUC Intelligence Committee reports.
90. Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) p. 473; Phillips op. cit. p. 211.
91. Phillips op. cit. pp. 242-244; C.L. Mowat op. cit. p. 326.
92. Phillips op. cit. p. 247.
93. PRO/RAIL/253/451 *Memorandum in Regard to the Strike Settlement* pp. 5 & 6. This document from this file has been used extensively for this portion of this chapter, <sup>and</sup> deals with the Strike settlement from the viewpoint of the management of the Great Western Railway. The document details the moves which led to the settlement on the railways and gives minutes of the meeting which determined the settlement. The document is entitled: MEMORANDUM in regard to the Strike Settlement, May 1926. There is a much briefer account of the negotiations in the E.C. minutes. It is based on a report given to the Executive by the Association's General Secretary: A.G. Walkden. (See following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3890 on pages 217-218 of the E.C. minute book).
94. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 7. Sir G. Granet, the chairman of the Railway Companies Association, discussing the aftermath of the Strike with the Minister of Labour on the morning of Wednesday May 12th.
95. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 6.
96. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 7.
97. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 8.
98. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 8.
99. Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) p. 486; PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM pp. 7 & 8.
100. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 9 & 10.
101. PRO/RAIL/253/951 MEMORANDUM p. 9.
102. Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) p. 487.
103. There is a copy of this letter on p. 10 of PRO/RAIL/253/451, also on p. 487 of Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen).
104. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 10; Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) p. 487.
105. following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3890 on pages 216-218 of the E.C. minute book.
106. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 11.
107. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 11; Bagwell op. cit. (The Railwaymen) p. 488.

108. Following MSS. 55B/EC/10/3890 on pages 216-218 of the E. C. minute book.
109. Following MSS. 55B/EC/10/3890 on pages 216-218 of the E. C. minute book.
110. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 12. Lord Ashfield was the chairman and managing director of the London Traffic Combine (also known as T.O.T. - Trams, Omnibuses and Tubes). This included most of the underground railways, many of the buses and some of the trams. It did not include the Metropolitan Railway.
111. David Butler & Anne Sloman, *British Political Facts, Fifth Edition*, London, 1980, p. 11.
112. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 7.
113. T.C. Barker and Michael Robbins, *A History of London Transport Volume II*, London, 1974. Chapter 17 pp. 312-328.
114. Ibid p. 322.
115. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 2.
116. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3890 on pages 216-218 of the E. C. minute book. By 'managers' Walkden meant the other companies' general managers. It is not intended to imply that there is a conflict between the minutes of the General Managers' meeting and Walkden's account. Even though Lord Ashfield did not intend to discipline any supervisors, he would probably have put up a token resistance before he formally and publicly abandoned the idea.
117. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 13.
118. PRO/RAIL/253/451 MEMORANDUM p. 12.
119. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3890.
120. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3888.
121. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3917.
122. As mentioned in Chapter 2, this organisation was a coal retailers' federation; because their retail business was a concession from their employer they were more likely to feel a loyalty to him rather than their fellow-workers-see K. Hoole, *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain: Volume 4 The North East*, Newton Abbot, 1974, pp. 21-22.
123. Any statement commenting on the Strike by a cabinet minister would demonstrate this, but page one of the first issue of the *British Gazette* published on 5th May, 1926, hammers it home.
124. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3891.
125. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on page 225 of the E. C. minute book.

126. The full text of this letter is in the E.C. minute on page 232 following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896.
127. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on page 234 of the E.C. minute book.
128. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on pp. 242-245 of the E.C. minute book.
129. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on page 240 of the E.C. minute book.
130. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3925.
131. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/5863.
132. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3964.
133. Bagwell (*The Railwaymen*) op. cit. p. 496.
134. Phillips op. cit. pp. 257 & 258.
135. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3897.
136. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3899; following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on pp. 236-239 of the E.C. minute book, there are given the names of the railway workers suspended under clause four. The one suspended under clause five is named following MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3996(d) on p. 74 of the E.C. minute book. There were thirty-one on the LMS plus the one suspended under clause 5 (eight station-masters, four goods agents, one controller, four supervising clerks, one steamship agent, one canvasser, five clerks, five inspectors, and two foremen. The worker suspended, <sup>under</sup> clause 5 was a station inspector. The LNER suspended twenty-eight (four district inspectors, one chief controller, eleven station-masters, one yardmaster one inspector, two agents, one cashier one inspecting clerk, four clerks and two foremen). There were fifty-five on the GWR (two district inspectors, one controller, sixteen station-masters, seven inspectors, one supervising clerk, eighteen clerks, one foreman, five signalman, one guard, one shunter one porter, and one stableman). It will be noted that the GWR suspended more workers than any other company. It also suspended grades that other companies did not suspend. The Southern suspended only three (a chief dock foreman, a station-master, and a goods agent).
137. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3899. The difference between the different grades of Association membership had been established in 1923, see page 2 note (16) above.
138. PRO/RAIL/253/451, Agreement dated 2nd June 1926; also following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3907 on pp. 269 & 270 of the E.C. minute book.
139. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3890.
140. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5863.

141. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3905.
142. Bagwell (*The Railwaymen*) op. cit. p. 496.
143. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3956.
144. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3899.
145. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3924.
146. *The Railway Service Journal*, August, 1926, pp. 261-264.
147. *The Railway Service Journal*, June 1928, p. 206; MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4030; MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4399. This case is known as Wilfred Edmunds Ltd. v Tomlinson and others.
148. On the 15th October 1927, the Railway Clearing House No. 1 Branch reported that all their members dismissed after the strike were now re-instated. See MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4230.
149. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11//4081; MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4100.
150. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4143.
151. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4208.
152. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4017(c).
153. Examples of this on the LNER are: a district inspector demoted to relief signalman, another district inspector to be passenger guard, several station-masters to clerical posts. See following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on page 239 of the E.C. minute book.
154. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3981.
155. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3996(b).
156. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4017(a).
157. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4035, 4037, 4047(a), & 4081.
158. Internal evidence indicates that the writer of an article in the *Guardian* for 1st May, 1976, was a woman. It was published to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the General Strike and is the source for my account of the Kingham affair.
159. The GWR list of clause 4 cases can be found following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on page 238 of the E.C. minute book.
160. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3996(d).
161. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4304.
162. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4081.
163. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3996(d) on page 74 of the E.C. minute book and MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4017(b).



164. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on pp. 236-239 of the E.C. minute book.
165. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3996(a); and MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4017(b).
166. This can be found following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on p. 238 of the E.C. minute book. It contains fifty-five names compared to thirty-two for the LMS, twenty-eight for the LNER and three for the Southern. In 1926, the GWR employed 114,649; the LMS 269,798 the LNER 201,615 and the Southern 72,844. These figures are taken from the *LMS Railway Company Handbook of Statistics 1929-1930*, published by the Costs and Statistics Office, Euston Station, London. The GWR clause 4 list included a signaller, a stableman, a guard, a shunter, and a porter none of these grades were included on any other company's list.
167. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3955(b).
168. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4106.
169. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4052.
170. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4238(b).
171. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3996(d).
172. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4238(e). The Metropolitan Railway Company behaved more like a main-line railway company than did the other London underground railway companies.
173. PRO/RAIL/235/451 MEMORANDUM p. 12.
174. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3996(e).
175. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4687.
176. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4208.
177. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4143(b).
178. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4208.
179. At this time the RCA's interests in Parliament were catered for by A. E. Townend and William Graham. See 'Parliamentary Affairs', Chapter 3.
180. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4081.
181. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4268.
182. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4290.
183. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4290; 4482.
184. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4554.
185. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4435.

186. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4587.
187. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4626 & 4627.
188. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4668.
189. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4687.
190. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4714 (a).
191. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/5127.
192. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4238 (e); MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5696, 5777, 5803.
193. Total trade union membership fell between 1925 and 1928 by 12.71% and between 1929 and 1932 by another 9.5%. (Phillips op. cit. p. 281). Phillips considers that the loss between 1925 and 1928 was due to the strike, but, after 1928 increasing unemployment would also have an effect. Margaret Morris traces the decline from 1920 to 1927 (op. cit. p. 277). In 1920, trade union membership was over eight million; by 1925 it was down to five and a half and by 1927, it was less than five million. Morris considers that the underlying influence on the figures was unemployment, but she also thinks that loss of confidence in the trade union leaders due to manner in which the strike ended must have had some effect.
194. See MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4238 (e); MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5696, 5777, 5778, 5803; Jeffrey Skelley (D.A. Wilson) op. cit. pp. 356 & 357.
195. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4182.
196. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5863.
197. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4209.
198. Mowat op. cit. p. 336.
199. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4274
200. *Railway Service Journal*, May 1928, pp. 165 and 166.
201. Phillips op. cit. pp. 85-95; Morris op. cit. pp. 44-51.
202. Following MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3896 on page 240 of the E.C. minute book.
203. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/3990.
204. Renshaw op. cit. p. 78.
205. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5863.
206. Transport Salaried Staffs Association Annual Report, 1976 p. 150.
207. *The Guardian*, 1st May 1976 p. 9.

208. My information is from R. Linsley who was a clerical worker in ex-LMS offices during this period, and subsequently became British Rail's Record Officer.
209. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4178.
210. MSS. 55B/1/EC/11/4208; T.O.T. stood for trams, omnibuses and tubes. This was a consortium managed by Lord Ashfield, it included most of London's public transport: much of its underground railways, a network of trams and many bus routes.
211. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4399(c).
212. PRO/RAIL/397/4. The letter is dated 6th July, 1926.
213. PRO/RAIL/253/451.
214. Morris op. cit. p. 22.

Chapter 6 How the Association Dealt with Dissension: Notes

1. Many accounts of the General Strike mention the Association. There is a passing allusion in Dora Russell, *The Tamarisk Tree*, London 1975 (paperback 1977) p. 186... 'It was said at the time that Walkden, the leader of the railway clerks, was so delighted at his men's solidarity, that he would march up and down his office singing, "The Railway Clerks are out on Strike", to the tune of the Red Flag.' In the Association's own records see especially: MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3888 and 3889. At the 1903 conference the Association voted 25 - 9 to become affiliated to the TUC (MSS. 55B/1/CON/1 - 4) A. G. Walkden was on the General Council of the TUC continuously from 1921 to 1936 (*Who's Who*, London, 1936) and Chairman in 1933 (MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5548). See chapter 3, which details the course of the Association's effort to make its members Members of Parliament.
2. Many commentators accept this. For example C. L. Mowat, *Britain between the Wars 1914 - 1940*, London, 1955, 1956, (1966) pp. 30-43; S. Glynn and J. Oxbarrow, *Interwar Britain: a Social and Economic History*, London 1976 pp. 163-168. For a contemporary 'bosses' view see PRO/MT/49/19: letter from Lord Ashfield to Sir E. Geddes dated 17 May, 1920.
3. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4/2148.
4. See *The Jogger* No. 13 March, 1929. Other instances are the Annual Conference of 1929 (MSS. 55B/1/CON/22) and the closing of the Sheffield Branch in 1913 (MSS. 55/1/CON/7.)
5. G. D. H. Cole and Raymond Postgate, *The Common People*, London, 1938 (1964) p. 56. ~~The Labour College Movement consisted of: The Central Labour College (1909 - 1929); The Plabs League (1908 - 1909); The National Council of Labour Colleges (1921-1969).~~
6. J. P. M. Miller *The Labour College Movement*, London, 1979 p. 57.
7. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4631, 4669, 4695 (2).
8. H. P. White, *Regional History of Railways in Great Britain Vol. II Southern England*, London 1961 p. 140.
9. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4695 (2).
10. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4610 (3), 4621, 4637.
11. MSS. 55B/1/EC/4669, 4695. See 55B/3/WEH/1-52 for the circular.
12. Miller op. cit. pp. 80 - 82.
13. There are several accounts of the history of the Labour Colleges. One is Appendix A in P. S. Bagwell *The Railwaymen* London, 1963, written from the point of view of one of the two trade unions which originally sponsored the Central Labour College - the ASRS, later the NUR. Another account, by W. W. Craik, *Central Labour College* London, 1964, Craik was a principal of the College. Another source is J. F. Horrabin and Winifred Horrabin, *Working Class Education*, London, 1924. Winifred Horrabin was secretary

- 13(cont.) of the Plebs League, which was affiliated to The Labour College Movement in 1924. Perhaps the most authoritative is J.P.M. Millar *The Labour College Movement*, London, 1979.
14. Several explanations have been offered to explain this phenomenon - a sure sign that it remains an open question. There is a good discussion in by Dr. B.A. Waites 'The Effects of the First World War on Class and Status in England 1910 - 1920' *Journal of Contemporary History* II. 34 (1976).
15. MSS. 55B/1/EC/5/2563.
16. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3189 (a),
17. MSS. 55/1/CON/23. The cost of a scholarship at the the CLC was only £125 p.a.; but students' further maintenance expenses and the College's expectation of general financial assistance beyond the educational fees produced the estimate of £500, (MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3189(b)).
18. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5864, MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/2977.
19. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3189
20. Bagwell op. cit., Craik op. cit., J.F. & W. Horrabin op. cit., J.P.M. Millar op. cit.
21. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3189 (a), MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3628,
22. MSS. 55/1/CON/24.
23. MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3121. See Chapter 3, 'Parliamentary Activities.'
24. MSS. 55B/1/CON/19.
25. MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3628.
26. MSS. 55/1/CON/27.
27. Bagwell op. cit., Craik op. cit., J.F. & W. Horrabin op. cit.
28. Craik op. cit. pp. 154 - 157.
29. MSS. 55/1/CON/39 - 40. JPM Millar op. cit. p.121 The Co-operative Union had affiliated to the NCLC in 1933 (JPM Millar op. cit pp. 116-117),
30. MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6358, 6450, 6261, 6380 (d).
31. This is discussed at greater length in Chapter 5: 'The Association and the General Strike'; detailed justification is there provided in substantiation of this short summary.
32. There were still veteran strikers employed by British Rail in the 1950's and also in the early 1960's; this was a constant complaint amongst them. (Private information from Mr. R. Linsley, a British Railways employee of long standing and until recently BR's Record Officer).

33. Most commentators on white collar workers discuss this point. See, for example, G.S. Bain, *The Growth of White Collar Unionism*, Oxford, 1970. D. Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker* London, 1958. F. Parkin *Class, Inequality and Political Order*, London, 1971.
34. The contrast between western capitalist ideology and other ideologies, particularly socialist ideology, is discussed by various commentators. See Parkin op.cit., R. Miliband *The State in Capitalist Society*, London, 1973, W.B. Gallie, 'Liberal Morality and Socialist Morality' (1956), reprinted in *Philosophy, Politics, and Sociology* Oxford, 1970 edited by P. Laslett.
35. There are periodical references to exemption from paying unemployment insurance in the E.C. minutes. The most recent series of minutes start in November 1933, when a new Unemployment Insurance Bill was proposed (MSS.55B/1/EC/16/5823). They were still exempted under this Bill when it became an Act until June 1937, when it was agreed by the Railway Companies and the Association that 15% of railway staffs should be insured. (MSS.55B/1/EC/19/6748). That is, 15% of the staff from each of the four main-line companies. (MSS.55B/1/EC/19/6762).
36. MSS.55B/1/EC/9/3614.
37. For a full account of the work of the Railway Clearing House see P.S. Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy 1842 - 1922* London, 1968. Despite the title, the account continues to 1963, when the Clearing House was finally disbanded.
38. MSS.55B/1/EC/8/3314.
39. MSS.55B/1/EC/9/3567.
40. MSS.55B/1/EC/9/3612.
41. For example see the LNER minutes for 25th June 1926. PRO/RAIL/390/7, MSS.55B/1/EC/11/3919.
42. There are detailed descriptions of the complicated negotiations and manoeuvres which led to the foundation of the CPGB in L.J. MacFarlane, *The British Communist Party: Its Origin and Development until 1929*, London, 1966; Henry Pelling, *The British Communist Party, A Historical Profile*, London, 1958 (1975); Roderick Martin, *Communism and British Trade Unions 1924-1933: A Study of the National Minority Movement*, Oxford, 1969; and Tom Bell, *The British Communist Party: A Short History*, London, 1937.
43. There is a list of membership figures down to 1929 at the end of MacFarlane op. cit. For its period it agrees with the longer list given in Pelling, op.cit.
44. Pelling op. cit. p.40.
45. McFarlane op. cit. p. 143.

46. For example, on its establishment the *Sunday Worker* numbered amongst its shareholders: 35 miners' lodges, 24 I.L.P. branches, 54 Labour Party branches, 24 trade councils, 72 trade union branches and 12 co-op guilds. However, the editor was always a member of the CPGB and for its launch a quarter of that year's subsidy from the Soviet Union was needed i.e. £4,000. In 1926 when it had a stable circulation of 85,000, CPGB membership varied between 6,000 and 46(cont.)10,730. (Cmd. 2682 p. 666, MacFarlane op.cit p.143.) In 1929, when the Communist party line changed, it closed down.
47. Pelling op. cit. pp. 26 and 27.
48. Most historians who examine the CPGB in the 1920s and 1930s discuss this point. See Martin op. cit. pp. 11 & 12 and MacFarlane pp. 102 - 104.
49. MacFarlane op. cit p. 229.
50. Two were set up in 1929: the United Mineworkers of Scotland and The United Clothing Workers' Trade Union in London. (MacFarlane op. cit, p. 247)
51. MSS. 55B/1/EC/10/3733.
52. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4447, 4466.
53. There is a file of *Joggers* held at the Modern Record Centre of the University of Warwick under the reference MSS.172A. Under this reference there are the following copies of this magazine; No.1 November 1927 to No.14 May 1929, and No.16 August 1929 to No.19 January 1930. At the John Johnson Collection in the Bodleian Library Oxford, there are issues No.6 May 1928 to No.20 March 1930. Here the *Jogger* is described as "A Communist Paper for Clearing House Clerks published from 1927 until an unknown date, irregularly (usually monthly)" - (as has been seen from the text, the E.C. of the Association had an influence on this irregularity) - "one penny an issue, published by the Euston Rail Group of the Communist Party, reproduced from typing".
54. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4466, 4495.
55. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4498.
56. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4495,
57. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4532, *Jogger* No. 10 December 1928,
58. MSS. 55B/1/EC/12/4547(2), 4559., MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4573 (a)
59. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4615, 4616. There is a copy of Purkis's letter to the General Secretary with this minute.
60. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4631, 4636.
61. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4657; this rule concerns members who are responsible for actions detrimental to the Association.

62. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4692, also *Jogger* No. 13 13th March 1929.
63. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4692.
64. MSS. 55B/1/CON/22.
65. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4692, 4763. For the Meerut trial see Pelling op. cit. pp. 42 and 43.
66. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4746.
67. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4760 (a).
68. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4778 (a).
69. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4807 (d).
70. MSS. 55B/1/EC?13/4778 (b), 4807, 4820, 4837, (at this point in the E. C. minutes there are two minutes with the same number; this refers to the second one). This is the Wilson who wrote an account of the activities of the Bradford RCA branch during the 1926 General Strike. (See Chapter 5, "The Association and the General Strike" and Jeffrey Skelley ed. *The General Strike 1926* Lawrence and Wishart, London 1976).
71. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4837.
72. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3236. The National Guilds Council was a socialist organisation which was active in the years immediately after the 1914 - 1918 war. It is associated with the economist and historian G. D. H. Cole, who was involved with the Labour Research Department.
73. This periodical was published between 1924 and 1929. It was not an open Communist newspaper, but it closed down in 1929, when a different Communist policy took effect. See Pelling op. cit. pp. 40 & 41, and note 46 above.
74. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4807 (b).
75. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/4881.
76. MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4841.
77. MSS. 55B/1/EC/14/4910.
78. MSS. 55/1/CON/31.
79. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5474, 5504.
80. ~~Ray~~ *Groves*, *The Balham Group; How British Trotskyism began*, London, 1974, p. 15.
81. Groves op. cit. gives the full text of the letter from Stewart Purkis to Harry Pollitt which led to his expulsion. See also *Essays in Labour History 1918 - 1939* Edited by Asa Briggs and John Saville: an article by John Saville 'May Day 1937' p. 270.



- 81 (cont.) note 106, records that Stewart Purkis and Rowland Hill (another RCA ex-communist) were both now Trotskyists.
82. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5517.
83. MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5563.
84. MSS. 55/1/CON/41, MSS. 55/1/CON/44.
85. *The Railway Service Journal* June 1939.
86. The Association's Journal has been published monthly from 15th June 1904. From 1904 to 1919 it was known as the *Railway Clerk* and from February 1919 to 1951 as *The Railway Service Journal*.; MSS. 55B/1/EC/20/6987.
87. Cole and Postgate op. cit. p. 56.
88. Rule 39a in 1929, currently Rule 38a.
89. The official view of the Association was rarely set out, this editorial celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Association and nostalgia was in fashion. A commemorative booklet was also published at this time: *Twenty-five Years of Work and Progress through the R. C. A.*, London, 1922.
90. MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5863.
91. MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3438.
92. *Railway Council, Sectional Railway Councils, and Local Departmental Committees* London and South Western Railway, London, February 1922. *Schemes for the Establishment of Local Departmental Committees, Sectional Councils, Railway Councils Central and National Wages Boards*, Railway Clerks Association, London, 1922. (Also see Chapter 1)
93. There is a short discussion of the various characteristics of organisations in Chapter One of *The Theory of Organisations*, London, 1970, ed. D. Silverman, which comments on the 'displacement of goals through time', a concept which is also discussed in R. Michels, *Political Parties*, London, 1915; R. K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structures*, Illinois, 1949; and R. K. Merton *The Dynamics of Bureaucracy*, Chicago, 1955.
94. Commentators on the participation by members of trade unions in the affairs of their unions, but who take different viewpoints on the matter are; V. L. Allen, *Power in Trade Unions*, London, 1954. S. Lipset, M. A. Trow, J. S. Coleman *Union Democracy*, Glencoe Illinois, 1956.

### CONCLUSION NOTES

1. P.S. Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, London, 1963, p. 201.
2. Ibid. pp. 351, 531.
3. Ross McKibbin, *The Evolution of the Labour Party 1910 - 1924*, Oxford, 1974 (Paperback 1986), pp. 119, 150-156.
4. P.S. Bagwell, *The Railway Clearing House in the British Economy 1842 - 1922*, London, 1968, p. 164.
5. Volumes of *The Jigger* can be found under the reference PRO/RAIL/ZPER/148, Part 1 (1921-1927) Part 2 (1927-1932).
6. Sheila Rowbottom, *Hidden from History*, London, 1973.
7. John Burnett, David Vincent, and David Mayall, eds. *The Autobiography of the Working Class*, Brighton, Vol.1 1984; Vol.2 1987; Vol.3 1989.
8. Appendix IV; Guy Roth, *Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-79*, London, 1965 (1980) p. 90 table 2.15.

## SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Notes on Sources

The main sources for the history of the Railway Clerks' Association are the Association's archives. The bulk of them is deposited at the Modern Records Centre at Warwick University, classified under 'MSS.55' or 'MSS.55B'. Some of the archives are retained at Walkden House in Central London, the headquarters of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association. The major items still held at Walkden House are a near-complete ~~run~~ run of annual reports, a set of rule-books and a run of the Association's journal. From June 1904 (when the first issue appeared) until January 1919, it was called the *Railway Clerk*; from February 1919 to April 1951 it was the *Railway Service Journal* and subsequently has been the *Transport Salaried Staff Journal*.

The run of rule-books at Walkden House starts at 1909 and continues to date. The Modern Records Centre at Warwick University has some of the earlier rule books. There have been 19 editions between 1909 and 1983 but new rule books are not issued after every rule change; Walkden House has several copies of some editions, with relevant amendments.

The main sources used for this thesis are the reports of the Annual Conferences and the minutes of the Executive Committee of the Association.

The full records of the proceedings of Delegate Conferences from July 1920 until May 1932 - most of the period covered by the thesis - are in untranscribed Pitman's shorthand, having been so retained because of a decision of the Association's Executive Committee in May 1922, to the effect that the full records should be left untranscribed. (At this date, the records of conferences from 1920 onwards had not been

transcribed and a decision was needed on them and on practice for the future, see MSS.55B/1/EC/7/2929). There are printed 'conference proceedings' for all years, but these lack the detail of the shorthand records.

There is a complete run of the Executive Committee minutes for the whole of the period covered by this thesis; it is numbered from 972, the first minute of the meeting of 25th and 26th January 1913, to 7395, the last minute of the meeting held on the 17th September 1939. There are two series of E.C. minutes: an early one from Feb. 1900 to Mar. 1906; and a later one from Jan. 1913 to the present day.

These minutes are the only records of executive decisions that the Association retained. There is no evidence that any more restricted records ever existed, and there is material in the minutes which the executive was unlikely to want to be published widely. Some of it has been used in this thesis, but other data includes details about the pay and conditions of individual staff, their mortgage arrangements and such matters which the Executive would want to keep confidential. The nature of the records was underlined when an Executive Committee member wanted copies of the minutes to be circulated to all members after committee meetings, and the suggestion was defeated. (MSS.55B/1/EC/8/3145)

The Executive Committee minutes are in typescript; the copies pasted in minute books held at Warwick are original and are the only record. This was brought home vividly to me whilst working in the Modern Records Centre, some years ago, when an official of the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association came in to consult an old Executive Committee minute. It recorded a decision that was relevant to a current problem about the application of appeals procedures for a particular case in which disciplinary sanctions were being invoked by the union; I

helped him find his information. The minutes are still working papers but extra copies are not kept at Walkden House.

The use of the minutes supports the view that they are a valuable record of the work of the union, but they have limitations. They record only what the Executive judged to be relevant; and there was a body of shared knowledge amongst the members of the Executive, often unspoken or alluded to in ways that would be clear then, but need to be elucidated now. But the over-riding consideration is that institutional minutes, such as the EC's, could never be a complete and sufficient source of knowledge of the matters that were institutionally addressed.

Principal other sources are unpublished papers held at the Public Record Office, and published State Papers. Of these, the main classes consulted at the Public Record Office have been the railway companies' records held under the references RAIL 1-780, and other records formerly held by the Railway Record Office, which are also filed under the 'Rail' class, i. e. RAIL 1000- 1165. Other records consulted at the Public Record Office are the Ministry of Transport records filed under the MT reference. They include papers dealing with railway affairs prior to 1919, when the Board of Trade dealt with them. Cabinet minutes and Cabinet papers filed under the CAB reference have also been consulted.

Published State primary sources, mainly Parliamentary Papers and reports of parliamentary proceedings, have also been used. For example: in 1908, a Departmental Committee enquired into railway superannuation funds.

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APPENDIX I

Numbers of Clerical and Administrative Staff broken down by  
Grade and Pay; also Total Railway Employment and Cost of  
Living Index 1920 - 1938.



APPENDIX II

Wage Rate and Cost of Living Indexes 1918 - 1940.

Weekly Wage Rate Indices

<u>1900 = 100</u>		<u>1956 = 100</u>		<u>1956 = 100</u>	
1918	207.8	1923	35.9	1933	34.4
1919	227.8	1924	37	1934	34.5
<u>1920</u>	<u>287.8</u>	1925	37.3	1935	35.1
		1926	37.1	1936	35.8
<u>1956 = 100</u>		1927	36.8	1937	37
1918	38.7	1928	36.3	1938	38.1
1919	42.4	1929	36.2	1939	38.3
1920	53.6	1930	36	1940	43.5
1921	53.0	1931	35.5		
1922	38.8	1932	34.8		

Cost of Living Index

July 1914 = 0

	1918	1919	1920	1921
January	85-90	120	125	165
February	90	120	130	151
March	90	115	130	141
April	90-95	110	132	133
May	95-100	105	141	128
June	100	105	150	119
July	100-105	105-110	152	119
August	110	115	155	122
September	110	115	161	120
October	115-120	120	164	110
November	120-125	125	176	103
December	120	125	169	99

Cost of Living Index (continued)



1922	July	84	1923	July	69	1924	July	70
	December	80		December	77		December	81
1925	July	73	1926	July	70	1927	July	66
	December	77		December	79		December	69
1928	July	65	1929	July	61	1930	July	55
	December	68		December	67		December	55
1931	July	47	1932	July	43	1933	July	38
	December	48		December	43		December	43
1934	July	41	1935	July	43	1936	July	46
	December	44		December	47		December	51
1937	July	55	1938	July	59	1939	July	56
	December	60		December	56		December	73
1940	July	87						
	December	95						

Sources: *Rates of Pay of Railway Staff*, Railways Staff Conference, July 1938; PRO/RAIL/421/42-46; *British Labour Statistics Historical Abstract, 1896-1968*, Department of Employment and Productivity, 1971.

This was the cost of living index devised during the first World War and continued in use from 1914 until 1947. For most of this time it was published by the Ministry of Labour. It was used to calculate changes in railway workers' wages made when the various sliding-scales were used.

APPENDIX III

Numbers of Members, Branches, amount of funds and average  
amount per member: 1918 - 1939.

Numbers of Members, Branches, Amount of Funds and average  
amount per Member: 1918 - 1939

Year	Members	Branches	Rate of Subscription	Total Funds	Average amount of Funds per Member		
1918	71,481	355	6d. per week	£ 50,330	£	14.	1d.
1919	84,337	427	6d. per week	£ 45,061*	£	10.	8d.
1920	87,054	478	6d. per week	£ 63,719	£	14.	8d.
1921	60,264	478	1/- per week	£108,031	£	1.	15. 10d.
1922	51,137	464	1/- per week	£153,143	£	2.	19. 8d.
1923	57,482	464	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£206,607	£	3.	11. 10½d.
1924	62,526	467	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£259,106	£	4.	2. 10½d.
1925	66,130	469	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£310,129	£	4.	13. 9d.
1926	54,795	455	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£119,833**	£	2.	3. 9d.
1927	50,208	447	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£139,049	£	2.	15. 4½d.
1928	52,227	448	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£172,531	£	3.	6. 1d.
1929	54,347	444	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£194,326	£	3.	11. 6d.
1930	59,473	444	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£231,358	£	3.	17. 10d.
1931	59,158	443	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£260,985	£	4.	8. 3d.
1932	58,964	442	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£303,145	£	5.	2. 10d.
1933	57,968	444	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£329,243	£	5.	13. 7d.
1934	58,677	435	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£363,749	£	6.	4. 0d.
1935	60,059	430	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£388,382	£	6.	9. 4d.
1936	60,931	432	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£426,231	£	6.	19. 11d.
1937	62,365	433	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£458,959	£	7.	7. 2d.
1938	64,106	435	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£490,814	£	7.	13. 2d.
1939	64,389	438	1/-, 9d. & 6d. per week	£534,462	£	8.	6. 0d.

\*Heavy cost of Unemployment Pay (See Chapter X) £23,790 in 1919

\*\*Heavy cost of General Strike (See Chapter X) £238,922 in 1926  
13,841 in 1927  
Total 252,763

Sources: MSS. 55B/1/EC/16/5863; PRO/FS/12/142.

371 words

APPENDIX IV

Comparative Data on Clerical Workers' Pay in 1910.

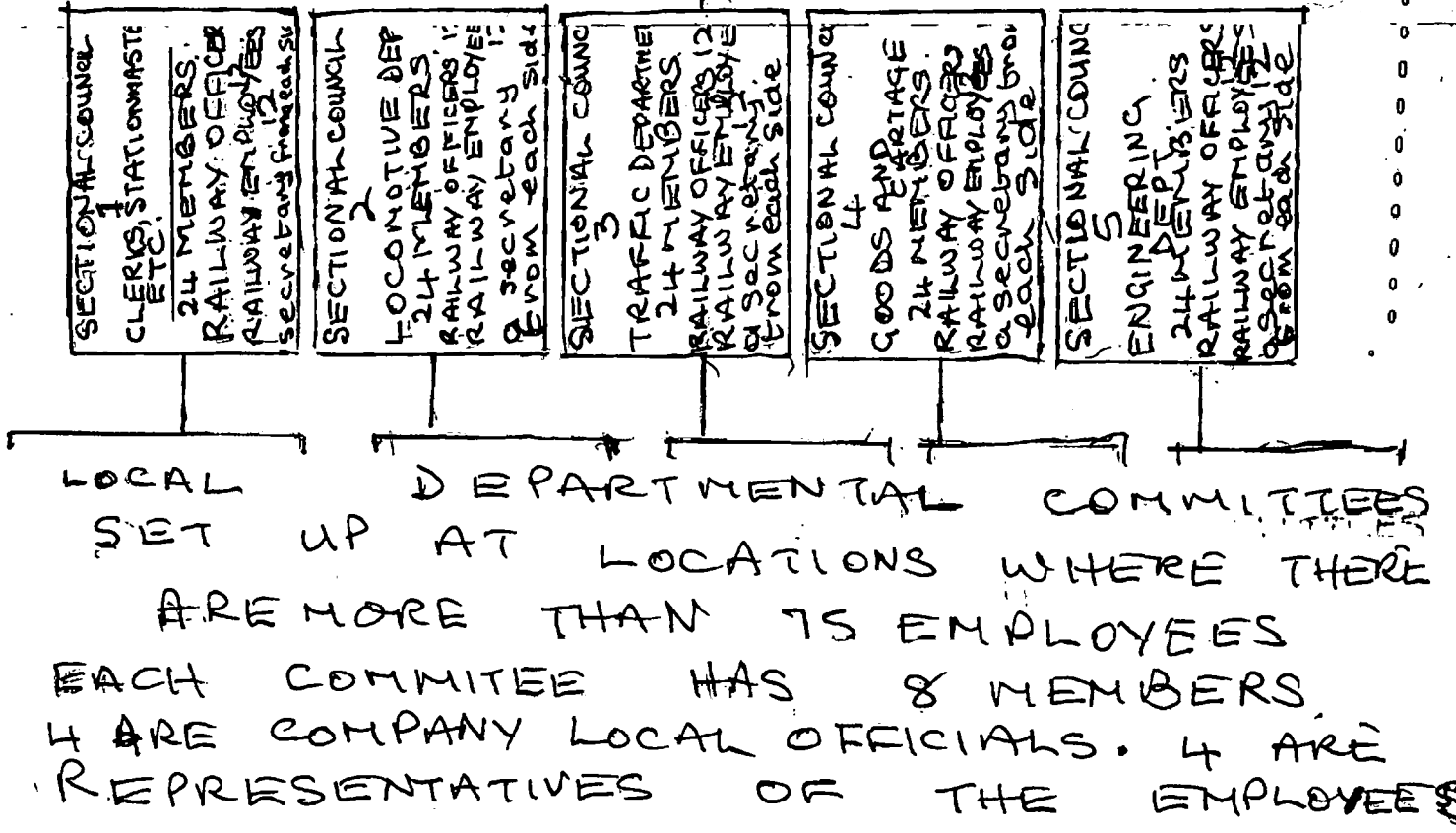
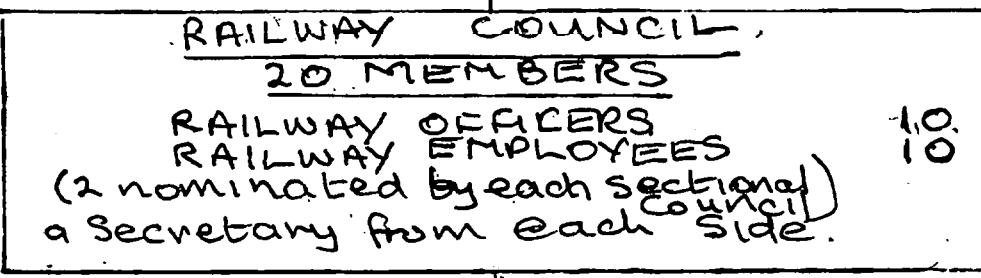
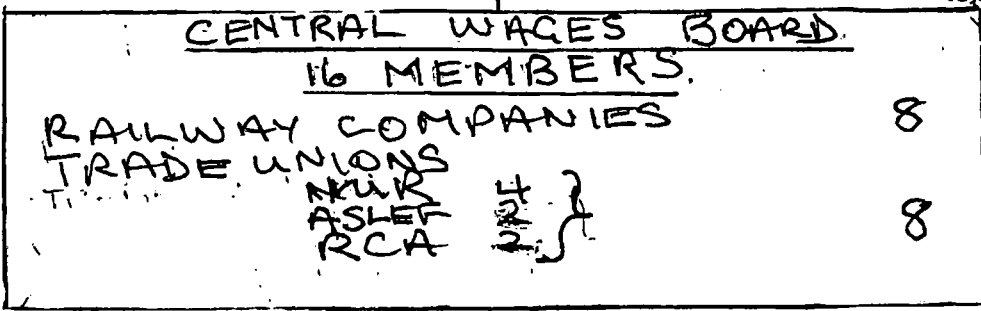
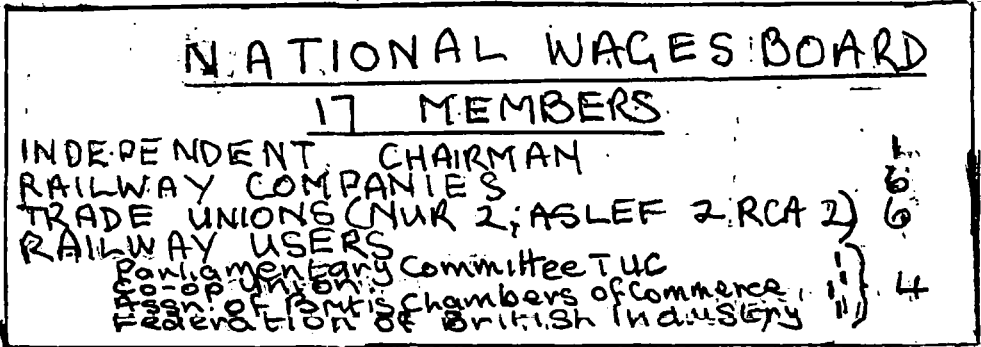
46.15%	of	Insurance Clerks
44.18%	of	Bank Clerks
43.18%	of	Commercial Travellers and Salesmen
36.84%	of	Civil Service Clerks
34.78%	of	Law Clerks
27.77%	of	Local Government Clerks
23.19%	of	Mercantile and General Clerks
22.22%	of	Telephone Clerks (other than Post Office clerks)
10.34%	of	Railway Clerks and Officers

(All these figures refer to male employees)

In 1910 the British Association were presented with these percentages at their annual meeting. They give the proportions of non-manual workers in various industries whose annual pay exceeded £160.

APPENDIX V

The Negotiating Machinery imposed by the 1921 Railway Act.



Based on Schemes for the establishment of Local Departmental Committees, Sectional Railway Councils and Railway Councils, also Central and National Wages Boards, London, 1922, The Walkden



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APPENDIX VI

Elections at which Association Members stood: 1918 - 1936.

ELECTIONS at which ASSOCIATION MEMBERS STOOD

1918. Voting 14th December 1918. Result declared 28th December 1918. The 'Coupon Election', Lloyd George and his wartime cabinet decided to prolong the wartime coalition of Conservatives, Coalition Liberals, and Coalition Labour in power, an election was long overdue, so a general election was called as soon as possible after the war. Because the supporters of the Government belonged to different parties each candidate, who supported the Government, could have a letter confirming this; it became pejoratively known as 'the coupon', which gave its name to the election. The result was: Coalition Unionist 335, Coalition Liberal 133, Coalition 10, (Total Coalition 478); Conservative 23, Irish Unionist 25, Liberal 28, Labour 63, Irish Nationalist 7, Sinn Fein 73, Others 10 (Total 707).

Six RCA members stood; three head office employees;

A. G. Walkden	Wolverhampton, West
G. Lathan	Watford
W. E. Hill	Enfield

Three members of the Executive Committee:

A. E. Townend	Blackley (Manchester)
H. G. Romeril	St. Pancras, South-East
T. H. Gill	York

1922. 7th March, by-election at Wolverhampton, West, A. G. Walkden failed to be elected.

1922. 15th November, called by Bonar Law to confirm his recently constituted government. This Conservative government was formed, when the Conservative 'back-benchers' rebelled and decided to no longer support Lloyd George's coalition. The result was: Conservative 345, National Liberal 62, Liberal 54, Labour 142, Others 12, (Total 615). Eight RCA members stood:

A. G. Walkden	Wolverhampton, West
G. Lathan	Enfield
H. G. Romeril	St. Pancras, South-East
T. H. Gill	York
A. E. Townend	Blackley (Manchester)
S. Lomax	Bolton
W. R. Robins	Gloucestershire (Cirencester and Tewkesbury)
F. Anderson	Derbyshire (High Peak)

1923. 6th December, called by Baldwin, Bonar Law had said he would not decide on a policy of protectionism without putting the decision to the test of an election; Baldwin wanted to have a protectionist policy, he felt bound by Law's promise. The result was: Conservative 258, Liberal 159, Labour 191, Others 7. (Total 615). It resulted in the formation of the first minority Labour government. Eight RCA members stood, one was elected:

H. G. Romeril	St. Pancras, South-East (The RCA's first M. P.)
A. G. Walkden	Wolverhampton, West
G. Lathan	Sheffield (Park)
A. E. Townend	Stockport
W. R. Robins	Gloucestershire (Cirencester and Tewkesbury)
F. Anderson	Derbyshire (High Peak)
G. Mathers	Edinburgh, West
F. C. Watkins	Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury)

1923 (cont.) The Association also helped to elect a non-member, W. W. Henderson at Enfield.

1924. 29th October; this election was forced on Ramsey MacDonald, when the Liberals withdrew their support and voted with the Conservatives to bring down the Government. The result was: Conservative 419, Liberal 40, Labour 151, Communist 1, Others 4, (Total 615). Seven RCA-supported and three 'helped' candidates stood, none were elected:

'Supported Candidates'

A. G. Walkden	Heywood and Radcliffe
G. Lathan	Sheffield (Park)
H. G. Romeril	St. Pancras, South-East.
T. H. Gill	Blackburn
A. E. Townend	Stockport
G. Mathers	Edinburgh, West
G. N. Gallie	Forfar

'Helped' Candidates

F. C. Watkins	Buckinghamshire (Aylesbury)
F. M. Jacques	Berkshire (Newbury)
H. Maw	Newcastle, North

1925. On the 17th September, there was a by-election at Stockport, A. E. Townend was elected as the RCA's second M. P.

1928. On the 13th July, there was a by-election at Halifax; A. W. Longbottom, the RCA's third M. P.

1929. 30th May; this was the first inter-war election called for the 'normal' reason: after four years in office, a Prime Minister, attempts to choose a favourable moment for an election, before the allotted time runs out. The election resulted in the second minority Labour government. The result was: Conservative 260, Liberal 59, Labour 288, Others 8, (Total 615). Eight RCA-supported and nine 'helped' candidates stood. Seven supported and one helped candidates were elected.

'Supported' Candidates

A. G. Walkden	Bristol, South Elected
G. Lathan	Sheffield (Park) Elected
H. G. Romeril	St. Pancras, (South-East) Elected
A. E. Townend	Stockport Elected
T. H. Gill	Blackburn Elected
G. Mathers	Edinburgh, West Elected
F. C. Watkins	Hackney, Central Elected
G. N. Gallie	Forfar

'Helped' Candidates

A. W. Longbottom	Halifax Elected
F. M. Jacques	Berkshire (Newbury)
J. Adshead	Manchester (Rusholme)
A. Moss	Manchester (Exchange)
W. Muter	Glasgow (Pollock)
W. R. Robins	Wiltshire (Chippenham)
J. A. Sparks	Somerset (Taunton)
H. H. Vickers	Yorkshire (Buckrose)
Frank Anderson	Lancashire (Stretford)

1931. 27th October; called by the recently formed 'National' government to confirm its authority. The Government had been formed with the support of the Conservatives, most of the Liberals and was headed by the Prime Minister of the previous Labour government, it also included a few of his Labour colleagues. Not surprisingly, the Labour party in parliament was routed. The result was: Conservative 473, Liberal National 35, Liberal 33, National Labour 4, (total government support 554); Labour 52, Independent Liberal 4, Others 5, (total 615). Eight RCA-supported and seven 'helped' candidates stood, none were elected.

'Supported Candidates'

A. G. Walkden	Bristol, South
---------------	----------------

1931 (cont.)

G. Lathan	Sheffield (Park)
H. G. Romeril	St. Pancras, South-East
T.H. Gill	Blackburn
A. E. Townend	Stockport
G. Mathers	Edinburgh, West
F. C. Watkins	Hackney, Central
A. W. Longbottom	Halifax

'Helped Candidates'

J. A. Sparks	Chelmsford
W. R. Robins	Chippenham
J. Adshead	Manchester (Rusholme)
F. Anderson	Lancashire (Stretford)
P. F. Pollard	Wandsworth (Balham & Tooting)
J. Willerby	Tamworth
F. M. Jacques	Watford

1935. 14th November; this can be considered to have been called for 'normal' reasons, but there had also been a change of Prime Minister. The Parliament had lasted nearly four years, which was nearly 'normal', the change of Prime Minister was from 'National' to Conservative; the Government was appearing less and less 'National' and more and more Conservative, so an election, as soon as possible after the change was sensible. Result: Conservatives 432, Liberals 20, Labour 154, ILP 4, Communist 1, Others 4, (Total 615). Ten RCA-supported and eighteen 'helped' candidates stood, Six supported candidates were elected:

'Supported Candidates'

A. G. Walkden	Bristol, South	Elected
G. Lathan	Sheffield (Park)	Elected
G. Mathers	Linlithgow	Elected
F. C. Watkins	Hackney, Central	Elected
F. Anderson	Whitehaven	Elected
F. B. Simpson	Ashton	Elected
A. E. Townend	Carlisle	
H. G. Romeril	Battersea, South	

1935 (cont.)

T. W. Burden	East Ham, North
A. W. Longbottom	Halifax

'Helped Candidates'

J. Adehead	Birmingham (Edgbaston)
R. S. Armstrong	Lancashire (Lonsdale)
A. J. Best	Yorkshire (Richmond)
H. P. Chilcott	Devon (South Molton)
J. Franklin	Lincolnshire (Louth)
J. Haworth	Liverpool (West Derby)
J. R. Hughes	Denbigh
C. W. James	Hemel Hempstead
H. Jones	Anglesey
G. S. Lindgren	Hitchin
J. McInnes	Pollock
S. W. Morgan	Watford
P. Morris	Swansea, West
A. Moss	Altrincham
W. R. Robins	Chippenham
F. Smithson	Yorkshire W. R. (Barkston Ash)
J. A. Sparks	Buckingham
R. W. Wright	Derbyshire (High Peak)

1936. November; at a by-election at Clay Cross (Derbyshire), G. Ridley, a RCA-supported candidate was elected.

Sources: F.W.S. Craig, *British Parliamentary Results 1918-1949*, London, 1969; MSS. 55B/1/EC/3/1729(d), 1764(b), 1838, 1855, 1858(e), MSS. 55B/1/EC/7/3015, MSS. 55B/1/EC/8/3253, MSS. 55B/1/EC/9/3465, 3474, MSS. 55B/1/EC/13/4746, MSS. 55B/1/EC/15/5375; MSS. 55B/1/EC/18/6330, MSS. 55B/1/EC/19/6595(a), *Railway Service Journal*, December, 1931, C. L. Mowat, *Britain between the Wars, 1918-1940*, London, 1955, pp. 2-8, 165-168, 187-194, 346-352.



APPENDIX VII

Discussion of Railwaymen on Strike in May 1926.

## Discussion of Data on railway workers on strike in May 1926

The figures presented below were obtained from two volumes called: 'Supply and Transport Committee Daily Bulletins'. These bulletins would have had a very limited circulation, because they are marked 'Secret'; they were only released to researchers on 1st January 1968. The reference for the first volume is PRO/CAB/27/331, this contains the figures for the 4th, 5th and 6th May; the reference for the second volume is PRO/CAB/27/332, this contains the figures for the rest of the Strike. On the first day of the Strike, the columns of figures are described as 'staff on strike' and 'normal staff'. On all other days, the two columns are described as 'staff available for duty' and 'normal staff'. There are two possible explanations for this change: the Supply and Transport Committee wanted to know what staff were available to work, so that they could estimate what intensity of railway service they could expect and asked for the data to be presented in that form, the other explanation is that the data came labelled 'staff available for duty' and 'normal staff' and on the first day the former was subtracted from the latter to obtain the data labelled 'staff on strike'. The bulk of this data needs to be manipulated in this manner, if a figure for strikers is wanted. The trouble with this is that it makes no allowance for people with genuine excuses for being absent from work such as holiday or sickness.

Because I have some personal knowledge, which is relevant to this problem, I have attempted to allow for employer-condoned absence in the data from Wednesday, 5th May 1926, when the formulation 'available for duty' was first used.

When I originally wrote this, part of my job was to monitor the absences from work of 100-120 London Transport railway workers. During 1982, there was a considerable amount of industrial activity on Britain's railways, including London Transport's. On London Transport's railways there had been very few strikes over the previous few years and clerical staff who had to handle this increase

in activity administratively were issued with instructions on how to submit the various periodical returns. I think it most likely that these instructions were more liberal than those issued to clerks doing a similar job in 1926. In 1982, the instruction was that only staff who booked on for duty, if necessary by telephone, and carried out the instructions they were given, would be regarded as 'on duty' and be paid for it. Only those whose absence was covered by a valid sick certificate were counted as sick, all others were considered to be on strike. At any one time, the average number of those one hundred and twenty railway workers with absences covered by a sick certificate was six. I consider that the figure would have been lower in May 1926 - obtaining a doctor's certificate is likely to have been more difficult. I have, therefore, used a fraction slightly less than for 1982 - i.e. 4% to represent the element of sick absence in the 1926 figures, it would probably also account for any holiday absence. Using this percentage a simple formula to obtain the probable number of strikers can be obtained:

$$\text{Normal Staff} - \text{Staff Available for Work} - \frac{4(\text{Normal Staff})}{100} =$$

= Probable Number of Staff on Strike

(It is acknowledged, of course, that this formula is arbitrary and crude).

There are other peculiarities of these figures, which should be noted. The machinery for collecting and collating them was apparently not perfected until the 7th May, so that, prior to that date, the figures for some companies are incomplete.

The figure for normal staff for the London and North-Eastern company appears to be rounded to the nearest one hundred, but for some days, it is broken down into into 'England' and 'Scotland' sub-totals not rounded, which nevertheless add up to 33,000, the full company total, which

looks like a rounded one. There is some doubt, therefore, whether the grand total is accurate and fortuitously a rounded figure, or whether the sub-totals have been adjusted to correspond to a rounded total, although discrepancies are unlikely to be material ones. The 'Normal Staff' figure for the GWR for the 4th May does not correspond with the same figure for that company for any other day.

Response of the Railway Clerical and Supervisory  
during the General Strike

Tuesday 4th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of Staff on strike</u>	<u>Normal Staff</u>
Great Western	3,434 (22%)	15,288
London and North-Eastern	Not yet available	
London Midland and Scottish	18,633 (43%)	43,181
Southern	Not yet available	

Wednesday 5th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of Staff on strike</u>	<u>Normal Staff</u>
Great Western	3,579 (23.3%)	16,126
London and North-Eastern	Not yet available	
London Midland and Scottish	17,888 (41.1%)	43,535
Southern	3,397 (32.6%)	10,410

Thursday 6th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of Staff on strike</u>	<u>Normal Staff</u>
Great Western	3,455 (21.4%)	16,126
London and North-Eastern	Incomplete	
London Midland and Scottish	18,038 (41.4%)	43,535

Southern	4,547	(43.7%)	1,0410
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Friday 7th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of Staff on strike</u>		<u>Normal Staff</u>
Great Western	3,445	(21.4%)	16,126
London and North-Eastern	14,731	(44.6%)	33,000
London Midland and Scottish	17,860	(41.0%)	43,535
Southern	4,171	(40.1%)	10,410

Saturday 8th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of Staff on strike</u>		<u>Normal Staff</u>
Great Western	3,442	(21.3%)	16,126
London and North-Eastern	15,097	(45.7%)	33,000
London Midland and Scottish	17,700	(40.7%)	43,535
Southern	4,155	(39.9%)	10,410

There are no figures for Sunday 9th May 1926.

Monday 10th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of Staff on strike</u>		<u>Normal Staff</u>
Great Western	3,504	(21.7%)	16,126
London and North-Eastern	14,409	(43.6)	33,000
London Midland and Scottish	17,044	(39.2%)	43,535
Southern	4,006	(38.5)	10,410

Tuesday 11th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of Staff on strike</u>		<u>Normal Staff</u>
Great Western	3,466	(21.5%)	16,126
London and North-Eastern	13,997	(42.4%)	33,000
London Midland and Scottish	16,074	(36.9%)	43,535
Southern	3,942	(37.9%)	10,410

Wednesday 12th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of Staff on strike</u>		<u>Normal Staff</u>
Great Western	3,423	(21.2%)	16,126
London and North-Eastern	13,405	(40.6%)	33,000
London Midland and Scottish	15,475	(35.5%)	43,535
Southern	3940	(37.8%)	10,410

Thursday 13th May 1926

<u>Railway company</u>	<u>Probable number of staff on strike</u>		<u>Normal staff</u>
Great Western	3,306	(20.5%)	16126
London and North-eastern	13,071	(39.6%)	33,000
London Midland and Scottish	15,023	(34.5%)	43,535
Southern	3,850	(36.9%)	10,410

There are no detailed staff statistics in the Supply and Transport Bulletins for the 14th May 1926. This was because many workers were back at work, the TUC having declared that the strike had ended. However, because the railway companies had insisted on such stringent conditions before they would allow any of their strikers to return, many railway workers were still out. In fact, there may even have been more clerks and supervisors on strike on that day than any other day of the strike. There are strike figures available for one railway company - the Great Western\* -

\* see PRO/RAIL/253/451. There were 3,113 clerks and 1,062 supervisors absent on the 14th May; this is uncorrected. Corrected for sickness etc., there were 3,530 clerical staff probably on strike out of a normal staff of 16,126, i.e. 21.9%

- and according to these there were 173 more clerks and 51

more supervisors on strike on the 14th May than there were on the 13th May. There is no similar increase in the number of conciliation (non-white-collar) staff on strike, but most of these staff had been on strike, so there was not the same scope for an increase.

Comments in the Supply and Transport Bulletins on the Strike situation on the railways on the 14th May 1926

Great Western	No large resumption of work.
London and North Eastern	Not signing on in large numbers
London Midland & Scottish	General disinclination to resume until all men were reinstated.
Southern	More men offered themselves than the company could find work for and a good many were told to stand by till work was available.