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'Disastrous' and 'detrimental': the National Union of Agricultural Workers'  
complaints against the employment of Axis prisoners of war, 1939-48

Speaking in parliament on 17 October 1946, Martin Lindsey (Con. MP Solihull) urged the government to recruit former Italian and German prisoners of war (POWs) to alleviate the labour shortage in Britain. Despite the desperate need for workers in agriculture, POWs were being steadily repatriated. Lindsey hoped the Home Office would permit them to remain and continue working on the land, perhaps even naturalise them in the future. He was well aware that trade unions would undoubtedly oppose such a scheme. 'The advantages', Lindsay bemoaned, 'of augmenting our labour force in this country by thousands of industrious, highly skilled, workers would appear to be obvious to anybody except, possibly, to trade union leaders'.<sup>1</sup> Historians have similarly emphasised the sizable contribution Italian and German POW labour made to British agriculture between 1941 and 1948. Yet, although the anxiety of British workers towards POWs and the resistance to their employment have been mentioned, analysis of it has been minimal. This article examines the attitude of the National Union of Agricultural Workers (NUAW) towards the employment of Italian and German POWs during and after the Second World War. It charts the intensification of resistance towards their employment after the end of the conflict, highlighting fears that the extensive use of forced and foreign labour would undermine the position of farmworkers, allowing employers and the government to sidestep the issue of improving conditions in agriculture.

This assessment of NUAW views is drawn from the records of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), the federation of trade unions which the Eastern Counties' Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union affiliated itself with in 1909. Using these records enables a comparison between union and governmental attitudes as the TUC General Council acted as a mediator. The first section considers the marginalisation of the NUAW in studies of POW employment in British agriculture during and after the Second World War and the more general lack of studies covering agricultural trade unionism in this period. The second section then examines NUAW attitudes towards the employment of Italian POWs between 1941 and 1943, focusing on proposals to employ them on skilled work. The third section provides a detailed examination of the discussion over rates paid to German POWs in late 1945 and early 1946. The fourth section considers the continued concern over foreign labour in post-war agriculture after the announcement of German POW repatriation in 1946. This article does not intend to challenge the conclusion that POWs were an important source of auxiliary labour during this period. Rather, it aims to account for the anxiety and resistance among farmworkers to POW labour as expressed by the NUAW and how this issue intersected with broader concerns over recruitment and conditions in post-war agriculture. In so doing, this article contributes to an overlooked period in the history of agricultural trade unionism.

I

The combined civilian agricultural workforce, including all male and female full and part-time labour, steadily increased during and immediately after the 1939-45 conflict from 729,000 in December 1941 to 891,479 in March 1947.<sup>2</sup> By

March 1940 problems with the supply of agricultural labour were evident. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries (MAF) estimated that 50,000 workers had been lost, approximately 30-35,000 enlisting in the armed forces (farmworkers could not be stopped from voluntarily joining up) while the remainder, taking advantage of the wartime situation, had moved from agriculture seeking better pay and conditions elsewhere, such as the construction of military installations in rural areas. The government's long-term solution was twofold. First, beginning in March 1940, all forty-seven County War Agricultural Executive Committees (CWAECs) raised wages to the effect that the national average was 37s. 10d. a week, a pattern that would continue throughout the war. Second, orders were issued in 1940 and 1941 to restrict the movement of labour from the land. Employers were prohibited from taking on workers usually employed in agriculture and workers that left work would come under the direction of the CWAECs. Both tactics helped stabilise the male agricultural workforce during the war, coercing workers to stay while reimbursing them with a better wage.<sup>3</sup>

As well as stemming the flow of labour from the land, Alun Howkins identified four key factors that alleviated the problems of agricultural labour supply during the war. First was the substantial increase in women employed in agriculture. By 1943 there were 87,000 Women's Land Army recruits, alongside 66,000 casual women workers. In that year, women made up a third of the total agricultural workforce. Second, miscellaneous groups were brought onto the land as supplementary labour, including conscientious objectors, gangs of volunteers, soldiers, casual labour and schoolchildren.<sup>4</sup> Third, the war witnessed a huge increase in machinery deployed on farms, with the power of the tractor eventually overtaking that of horses. The fourth factor Howkins

identified was the increase in POW labour, which became a mainstay of the agricultural workforce.<sup>5</sup> POW employment in agriculture can be split into two broad waves, with Germans eventually outnumbering the Italians. In total, the number of Italian POWs employed in Britain increased from 2,000 to 162,000 between 1941 and 1945. In 1944 the first groups of German POWs were set to work, their number peaking at 381,000 in August 1946. In regards to those employed in agriculture, 50,000 Italians were working in the sector in 1945. After experimental employment of 969 German POWs in January 1944, the number engaged in agriculture increased exponentially. By October 1944 there were 16,000, and their number peaked at 170,000 in March 1947. Roughly half the POWs working in Britain at any time were contributing to agricultural production.<sup>6</sup>

While they acknowledge the role of POW labour, surveys of British agriculture during and after the Second World War concealed the importance of it.<sup>7</sup> Re-examining the cautious estimations of POW labour made in earlier studies, recent investigations have stressed their contribution.<sup>8</sup> Analysing the productivity of POW labour in agriculture, Johann Custodis revised qualitative estimations through quantitative analysis. He has demonstrated that they were by and large industrious workers and that their contribution to agriculture, particularly in the post-war years, was significant.<sup>9</sup> The murmurs of discontent and resistance among trade unions towards POW labourers have been registered in previous studies. Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich noted that the government was wary to canvass union attitudes towards the employment of Italian POWs.<sup>10</sup> Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert have commented that the NUAW sought to protect workers from the German POWs employed in post-war Britain.<sup>11</sup> Custodis has mentioned the dilemma faced by

the Agricultural Wages Board regarding rates paid for Italian POWs. On the one hand, as their work was sub-standard it was unreasonable for farmers to pay the standard rate. On the other, POWs could not be seen as the cheaper alternative to British workers as the union would undoubtedly object to the undercutting of wages.<sup>12</sup> Richard Moore-Colyer has suggested the NUAW were ambivalent towards POW labour until 1946 when it intensified resistance to what they considered to be a threat of casualization.<sup>13</sup> While these observations clearly highlight discontent among farmworkers, in the evaluation of the contribution of POW labour to British agriculture the voice of the NUAW has been marginalised.

The absence of NUAW attitudes reflects a broader trend in the historiography of agricultural trade unionism, which has largely neglected the 1940s. This is surprising considering that the reputation and membership of trade unions witnessed substantial growth during the Second World War. Between 1938 and 1945, total trade union membership increased from 6,053,000 to 7,803,000 while affiliated membership of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) rose from 4,669,000 to 6,671,000. Along with other smaller unions such as the Electrical Trades Union and the National Union of Public Employees, the NUAW saw their membership expand twofold.<sup>14</sup> The rise in NUAW membership was no doubt influenced by the fact that the need for agricultural labour made it less dangerous for workers to join. Furthermore, the successful negotiation of higher wages during the conflict increased the standing of the NUAW.

The NUAW was the direct descendent of the farmworkers union founded in Norfolk in 1906 and had simplified its name from the National Agricultural Labourers' and Rural Workers' Union in 1920. NUAW membership had been

increasing steadily prior to the war, from 46,943 in 1938 to 50,069 in 1939, with a smaller number of agricultural workers members of the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU). The rapid increase of membership during the war continued into the immediate post-war and by 1947 the NUAW had 162,533 members, pushing towards 200,000.<sup>15</sup> While membership did not witness a decline as severe as after the First World War, by 1957 the NUAW claimed roughly 150,000 members. The 'optimistic expectations' of continued growth 'proved mistaken', and the NUAW estimate that 30 to 50 per cent of employed agricultural workers were members is, Self and Storing argue, 'certainly exaggerated'.<sup>16</sup> Even with the rapid wartime increase of membership, rough estimations would suggest that less than one-fifth of farmworkers were NUAW members in 1947.

Despite only a minority of farmworkers belonging to the NUAW during and after the Second World War, the period was still one of unprecedented growth in membership and recognition. Studies of the NUAW in mid-twentieth century Britain are, however, scarce. In 1948, spurred on by the landslide election of Labour in 1945, Reg Groves' *Sharpen the Sickle!* appeared.<sup>17</sup> Save for Bob Wynn's *Skilled at All Trades: The History of the Farmworkers' Union 1947-1984*, there is a dearth of literature covering agricultural trade unionism post-1945.<sup>18</sup> Instead, historians have focused on examining its origins in the 19th century and the inter-war period.<sup>19</sup> Howkins' pioneering study, *Poor Labouring Men: Rural Radicalism in Norfolk, 1872-1923*, was first published in 1985. Moving beyond the economics of rural life, Howkins provided an account of the character and culture of rural labourers and their responses to the 'great depression' of the 1890s, ending with an examination of the great Norfolk strike of 1923 and the long-term implication of that watershed in agricultural trade

union history. Exploitation was a constant theme in the experience of farmworkers during this period, the persistent conflict between farmers and rural labour being the force behind campaigns to organise a permanent agricultural union. Attempts to build a centralised national union were curtailed by the local character of protest, Norfolk being the dominant force, as well as the use of dismissal, eviction and blacklisting by employers to keep protesting labourers in check.<sup>20</sup> Yet, after the turn of the century, a new campaign of protest came forward, shaped by the growing need and ability of rural labour to participate in a nationwide structure of trade union activity.

Howkins pinpointed the 1923 'great strike' in Norfolk as a seminal moment in the history of agricultural trade unionism, which influenced the course the NUAW would take. The event, according to Howard Newby, 'dominated the thinking' of the union for over five decades.<sup>21</sup> In Norfolk and several other regions the union strikes were called to oppose wage cuts. While certainly not a great success, the result of the strike was also not a humiliating defeat. Having learned the futility of calling members to down tools, the strike, Clare Griffiths has written, 'marked the end of the union's career of militancy'.<sup>22</sup> Much like the Trades Union Congress' re-organisation after the 1926 General Strike, the NUAW's focus went into administration and establishing working relationships with employers and the state.<sup>23</sup> Edwin Gooch set the union on a new course during his presidency between 1928 and 1964. In the 1930s, Gooch fundamentally shifted NUAW policy, persuading the Executive their members interests did not necessarily correspond with industrial workers and focused on working with the National Farmers Union in matters of agricultural policy.<sup>24</sup> An analysis of NUAW attitudes towards POW employment during the war can help



provide insight into its relationship with the government during and after the Second World War.

## II

Despite only 257 German POWs being held in Britain by 8 March 1940, the possibility of employing them was discussed throughout the period of 'phoney war'.<sup>25</sup> Suggestions were based on the memory of German POW labour employed in Britain during the First World War. One newspaper correspondent shared his fond recollections of the German POW in his charge during the Great War. 'The prisoners', he recalled, 'certainly did work magnificently they ploughed hundreds of acres, proving exceptionally competent with the tractor'.<sup>26</sup> Farmers recalled how German POWs were a prized source of labour during the 1914-18 conflict. Amongst the assortment of labourers one farmer had been allocated, he picked out German POWs as 'the best workers I ever had [...]'. They were so good that I concluded they were a special type of man'.<sup>27</sup> Calls to employ German POWs in parliament were, however, dismissed. The government denied that it planned to lease POWs to farms and estates in February 1940, but conceded that the matter would be 'kept under review'.<sup>28</sup> MAF overtures to the Ministry of Labour (MOL) for POW labour received the same response. Given the high level of unemployment, the MOL feared that the trade unions would undoubtedly oppose the introduction of POWs.<sup>29</sup> Desires to see German POWs set to work were ultimately quashed after the decision to transport them to the Dominions. Considered too dangerous to remain in Britain at a time of potential invasion, German POWs were shipped to Canada, South Africa and Australia.<sup>30</sup> Near the same time, a contradictory policy developed

towards their Axis counterparts. Having entered the war as Germany's ally, Italian advances in Libya had been defeated by British forces and resulted in mass captures of Italian servicemen. With Middle East Command eager to be rid of the burden of guarding, feeding, and accommodating the POWs, the MAF requested 1,000-2,000 be brought over for employment in agriculture.<sup>31</sup> The scheme was approved and quickly expanded to include 25,000 Italian POWs.<sup>32</sup> In August 1941, Minister of Agriculture Robert Hudson informed parliament that the first 2,000 had arrived and more were expected in the near future.<sup>33</sup>

If there was unrest among farmworkers over the initial introduction of Italian POWs it was neither riotous nor rife. Sporadic complaints were made in parliament concerning supposed preferential treatment shown to the Italians. Conservative MP Alfred Bossom asked Hudson if he was aware that Italian POWs were issued rubber boots while farmworkers were not. Hudson assured him that this was not the case. Unimpressed, Bossom invited Hudson to 'come down to Kent and see all the Italian prisoners walking around in their rubber boots'.<sup>34</sup> The provision of bicycles to Italian POWs would also irk some as British workers found it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain them. The government emphasised that this was an efficient way for certain Italian POWs to travel to and from work as it saved petrol.<sup>35</sup> Feelings that Italian POWs were provided comforts denied British workers were exacerbated by reports of their indolence.<sup>36</sup> There were also complaints of the sexual danger the hot-blooded, amorous Italians posed to women workers.<sup>37</sup> Yet, the initial employment of Italians does not seem to have significantly perturbed the NUAW, which was focusing on increasing wages and denouncing the use of child labour.<sup>38</sup> By July 1943, Italian POWs represented only 0.27 per cent of the civilian labour force and did not seriously threaten the position of British farmworkers.<sup>39</sup>

The signing of the Armistice of Cassibile on 3 September 1943, which formalised the surrender of Italy to the Allies, raised questions over the future utilisation of Italian POWs. If the stipulations of the Geneva Convention were respected, the Italians would have to be repatriated. Fears that these vital workers would be lost were allayed after negotiations with the Badoglio government. Rather than a fully-fledged ally in the fight against Germany, Italy was deemed a 'co-belligerent'. While recent captures of Italian POWs during the fighting in Tunisia and Sicily were returned, those in Britain were allowed to remain. They were offered the status of 'co-operator' whereby their continued employment would be rewarded with greater freedoms.<sup>40</sup> Although the flow of Italian POWs had been capped, there was now an opportunity of expanding Italian POW labour into previously prohibited areas.<sup>41</sup> At a meeting of the Joint Consultative Committee, the MOL canvassed trade union opinion towards the extension of Italian POWs into skilled work. At that time, 50,000-55,000 worked in agriculture and the War Office employed 10,000. Over half the remainder were employed in timber production and limestone quarrying, while the rest providing labour across a variety of industries. The 1929 Geneva Convention stipulated that POWs could not be employed on work directly associated with the war effort. As 'co-operators', Italians could be employed in such areas where there was an acute shortage of skilled men. The MOL planned to survey the number of skilled men among the POWs and place them in trades to fill gaps. Subject to any special arrangements, employers of POWs would be required to pay the same rate as if they hired British workers.<sup>42</sup>

The TUC General Council had reservations over the proposal, stating that it 'was more likely to disturb production than to assist the war effort, more particularly in view of the fact that at the present time deferments of skilled

workers in the munitions industries were being cancelled'.<sup>43</sup> In late November 1944 Walter Citrine, TUC General Secretary, wrote to affiliated unions concerning the employment of Italian POWs. The General Council had received complaints that certain Government Departments had been attempting to extend their employment and asked affiliates to provide information on the number of Italians in their industry, whether or not Italian POWs were useful and what, if any, problems had arisen regarding their employment. Bill Holmes, the General Secretary of the NUAW and agricultural representative on the TUC General Council, was among the recipients of Citrine's letter.<sup>44</sup> A report summarising union responses provides insight into the general attitudes in several sectors.<sup>45</sup> Union opinion was generally negative and Italian POWs were not seen as useful workers. Several unions had blocked the employment of Italian POWs or successfully pressed for their withdrawal from the particular industry. Arguments against the Italians included the belief that they 'should be returned to their own country at the earliest possible moment' and that it was unjust to call up British workers to fight and replace them with Italian POWs.<sup>46</sup> Union resentment towards Italian POWs was fuelled by the failure to notify union representatives of their proposed employment. The NUAW similarly desired the withdrawal of POW labour:

[...] they feel agriculture to be the 'dumping-ground' for all aliens, friendly and unfriendly. Opinions vary widely regard the usefulness of Italian prisoners, but, in the main, considering that they are prisoners of war they do a fair day's work. The German prisoners, however, are a better type and work better than the Italians. There have been complaints regarding the attitudes of these workers here and there, but they have

been very few and, where they have been investigated, it has been difficult to secure much confirmation. Agriculture workers will be glad to see the back of them as soon as possible, a desire which the union suspects is shared by the prisoners themselves.<sup>47</sup>

NUAW members accepted that POWs were decent workers. It was felt, however, that they and other foreigner labourers were being dumped in agriculture and, while only a small number of objections over the attitude of POW labour had been made, in general British workers would be eager to be rid of them. This suggests either a reluctance to admit the importance of POW labour to agricultural production or an ignorance of it. Or, perhaps, the union was well aware of the importance of POW labour to agriculture and, concerned of the position of their members, sought to resist the further expansion of POW labour. The TUC was, therefore, clearly conscious of union aversion towards Italian POWs, but concluded that their continued employment was necessary. It insisted, however, 'that protests be made against the employment of Italian prisoners of war without consultation with the unions or TUC and against any extension of their present employment'.<sup>48</sup>

The expansion of the POW workforce was met with increasing resistance from the NUAW, alarmed by reports that the number of German POWs in agriculture would be increased. In January 1945, the *Land Worker* reported that the union, responding to the announcement that the government would make 'fuller use' of German POWs, planned to protest 'against an unlimited number of them being employed without consultation'.<sup>49</sup> On 1 January 1945 the TUC received a copy of a letter sent to the MAF and MOL by the NUAW that protested against the 'lack of consultation and victimization in connection with

the employment of [POWs]', and stated that NUAW members were distressed by press reports that large numbers of German POWs would be replacing Italians.<sup>50</sup> The NUAW subsequently informed the TUC that they would ask the MOL to receive a deputation and invited the General Council to attend.<sup>51</sup> News of the NUAW's concern over POW labour reached Percy Izzard, agricultural correspondent for the *Daily Mail*, who reported that the union was troubled by the increased employment of German POWs and how this might 'react against' their members.<sup>52</sup>

On 20 March 1945 the JCC discussed the employment of Italian POWs in Great Britain.<sup>53</sup> The continued employment of Italian POWs was deemed 'essential in the national interest'.<sup>54</sup> The difficulties which had arisen from their employment were due to 'misunderstandings regarding the arrangements, and to lack of guidance from above when proposals have been under consideration locally'. It was believed that the 'rigid ban' on Italian POWs performing skilled work had 'operated to prevent urgent and important work from being carried out' and that the ban should be modified. It was proposed that Italian POWs should be permitted to perform skilled work provided that both sides of industry were consulted and that local consultation took place in the same manner as POWs employed on unskilled work.<sup>55</sup> The JCC discussed the 'best way of providing guidance regarding national policy to those who had to consider particular proposals for the employment of Italians in the localities' and 'a proposed modification, subject to consultation with the Unions at HQ and locally of the present rules regarding the employment of Italians on skilled work'. On 19 April, affiliated unions were informed that the General Council 'had acquiesced to the extension of the employment of Italian to semi-skilled and skilled work in connection with industries having high priority in the national interest'.<sup>56</sup> The

need to provide labour overrode NUAW desires to be rid of Italian POWs.

Between the arrival of the first groups in 1941 and the extension of Italian POWs onto skilled work, NUAW opinion shifted from ambivalence to increasing alarm at their continued employment in greater numbers. The introduction of German POWs towards the end of the war and their post-war employment heightened NUAW concerns leading to formal complaints made to the MAF.

### III

In August 1945, the MOL consolidated and revised instructions to User Departments employing POWs. They were now obliged to confer with the representatives of relevant trades unions before POWs were introduced on work. Furthermore, before POWs were employed a User Department had to ensure that no British labour was available, and if it became so later that POWs were substituted for British workers.<sup>57</sup> The NUAW and MAF struck a deal whereby POW labour would be withdrawn if it could be proved that it had displaced farm workers.<sup>58</sup>

During 1945 the number of German POWs employed in agriculture increased significantly. Although the government was reluctant to see large numbers of German POWs held in Britain, the poor conditions British owned POWs (those that were taken by British forces but in French custody) were subjected to were seen as 'an embarrassment'.<sup>59</sup> Grigg insisted that they were transferred to Britain but noted that shipments of Italian POWs from South Africa would have to be cancelled. There were already 130,000 German POWs in Britain and the only means to accommodate them had been by using tents and deliberately overcrowding camps.<sup>60</sup> Grigg foresaw a 'very difficult situation'

if the number of German POWs in Britain could not be reduced. While Grigg pressed his colleagues to transfer the German POWs from French custody to Britain, Bevin was alarmed by the suggestion that shipments of Italian POWs had to be cancelled. Reiterating the importance of POW labour, he insisted that German POWs would have to replace any cancelled Italian shipments. The Inter-Departmental Committee for the Allocation of Prisoners of War advised that the security restrictions governing the employment of German POWs be lifted so that 20,000 could be set to work in agriculture and forestry, in addition to the 16,000 already employed.<sup>61</sup> The cabinet agreed these proposals in November 1944.<sup>62</sup> This decision would result in an increasing number of German POWs employed in agriculture, eventually outnumbering Italians.

In August 1945, the *Land Worker* reported that the 'maximum use' of POW labour would be made during the forthcoming harvest. While accepting the necessity of ensuring an 'adequate supply of labour', it warned that the use of German POWs 'requires to be carefully watched'.<sup>63</sup> POW employment was a short-term solution that allowed the government to overlook the problems of recruitment of agricultural workers. Faced with increasing numbers of German POWs in agriculture, the NUAW stepped up its resistance. On 20 November 1945 a NUAW deputation consisting of President Edwin Gooch, General Secretary Alfred Dann, Hubert Lockett and Harold Collison attended a JCC meeting. The two issues raised were rates paid by farmers for POW labour and the billeting of German POWs. When there was a pressing need for agricultural labour during the war, the NUAW had agreed an initial rate of 1/- per hour for Italian POWs as their work was of 'an inferior character'. Without consulting the unions, the MAF had introduced German POWs on the same rate and it was felt that the continuation of this rate was 'detrimental' to British farm workers. The



NUAW, supported by the TGWU, insisted that if German POWs were to continue in agriculture they must be paid for at the rate of the job, which had been set by the Agricultural Wages Board at 70/- a week in March.<sup>64</sup> Regarding POW rates, the NFU representatives had 'reluctantly' agreed to the rate being increased to 52/- per week and Appointed Members stated that they were prepared to support an increase to 56/- a week. Before the NUAW could comment on the proposal, the MAF had fixed the rate at 60/- until March 1946.

At the meeting, Dann asserted that agricultural workers were being dismissed due to the availability of cheap POWs. Furthermore, the NUAW were now aware of the proposals to billet German POWs on farms. Although the billeting of Italian POWs had been accepted, 'there was considerably greater resentment against this proposal in respect of Germans'. The NUAW stressed the need for POW rates to be raised to the minimum wage of agricultural workers and an increase in the demobilisation of farm workers. This, they believed, would 'dispense with the necessity for the employment of any prisoners'. The JCC agreed that the MOL and MAF would be interviewed by a TUC General Council deputation about these issues.<sup>65</sup> The deputation met with the Minister of Labour George Isaacs and Minister of Agriculture Tom Williams at the House of Commons on 22 January. The TUC General Council delegation included Charles Dukes, President of the TUC, who also chaired the meeting. The General Secretary of the TGWU Arthur Deakin formed the union side of the delegation along with Gooch, Dann and Collison.

An NUAW statement was read outlining complaints received from local branches in connection with POW labour.<sup>66</sup> Reports suggested that German POWs were displacing British workers, as the rates paid for their labour did not match estimations of their productivity. Most German POWs were experienced

in agricultural work, and had proved to be 'well-disciplined' and 'tractable'.<sup>67</sup> As a result, 'it was a paying proposition to farmers to get a body of disciplined men to work for them, first at a rate of a shilling an hour and then at 1/3d'. The NUAW pointed out that if a farmer employed a member of the WLA through the WAEC, the cost to him would be no less than 1/3d. an hour and to obtain male workers he would have to pay the overhead charges in addition to the minimum rate of wages applicable to the county. The NUAW believed that the availability of POWs at this rate was 'disastrous' for British agricultural labourers as farmers would always seek the most cost-effective labour.<sup>68</sup>

Reports indicated that farmers were using underhand methods to acquire German POW workers. The NUAW did not blame farmers for doing so, however. Instead they understood that farmers were essentially being offered cheaper labour by the government and would naturally take it. Since 1941 Gooch had made efforts to foster good relationship between workers and farmers. In Cambridgeshire NUAW members employed by Mr. Robbins in Isleham were offered 18 shillings an acre for harvest work. They refused this wage as it was usually a higher rate. Mr. Robbins immediately asked his local WAEC for POW labour, which was supplied. The NUAW representatives argued that this was 'a typical case of a farmer attempting to depress rates of wages by means of German labour'.<sup>69</sup> Reports also indicated that in parts of the country where it had been usual for many jobs to be done piece-work rates, farmers were introducing German POWs on time-rates. Piece-work earnings offered workers additional pay as their wages reflected productivity. The introduction of German POW on time rates deprived NUAW members the added remuneration they had 'a right to expect' from piece-work earnings.<sup>70</sup> Amongst other examples, in Bedfordshire, members of the Cople Branch

complained that Mr. Mark Young of Sandy was employing thirty German POWs to stook corn. This was usually done on a piece-work basis, until the arrival of the prisoners. When POWs were not available British workers performed a variety of jobs on piece-work rates which they then had to do on day rates. In addition, the NUAW highlighted that farmers were retaining POW labour while dismissing or turning away British workers. For instance, in Lincolnshire, Mr. B. Runciman of Weston Spalding discharged two union members stating that 'there was nothing for them to do'.<sup>71</sup> At the same time he employed four German POWs. In sum, the NUAW argued that the cases mentioned showed how POW labour was 'undermining the economic position of British workers in agriculture', presenting farmers with 'an economic power against the workers' which prevented them from 'obtaining the rates of wages and conditions of employment [...] necessary to their well-being'.<sup>72</sup>

The TUC agreed with the unions that the availability of German POWs on a rate lower than normal was having a detrimental effect on British farm workers and the industry in generally. Furthermore, the continued employment of POWs was believed to be preventing the demobilisation of farm workers. Dann agreed, noting that jobs usually paid at piece rate were now only available at day rates. He accepted that it was difficult to prove that a specific worker had been replaced by a POW but was adamant that British workers were being dismissed from work where Germans were employed. The 'inescapable conclusion was that the worker would not have been dismissed had it not been for the fact that the prisoners of war labour was available'.<sup>73</sup> The unions felt that the presence of 160,000 POWs on the land had affected recent wage negotiations. If farmers could hire POWs at 60/- a week instead of 70/-, the rate for British farm workers, they would give preference to the POWs. Deakin noted

that in all other industries the rate of the job applied for POW labour, thus employers had no advantage in hiring them. Deakin noted that farmers got a 'double profit'; their prices were guaranteed based on the cost of labour but they could obtain cheap POW labour. Here, the NUAW refused to blame farmers for seeking out POW labour. Responsibility rested with the government, which had refused to account for the productivity of German POWs when setting rates farmers paid. It was not the farmers that were criticised for hiring cheaper POW labour but the government for providing it.

This reflects the rapprochement the NUAW sought with farmers that Alan Armstrong observes. During the war Edwin Gooch spoke at the Farmers' Club in 1941 and 1944. Here, he argued that post-war prosperity in agriculture relied upon the cooperation of landowners, farmers, and farm workers. The lot of farmworkers, Gooch argued, relied upon the prosperity of the industry as a whole. In 1944 Gooch had accepted that conditions had improved significantly during the war but equality with other essential workers in terms of wages, housing, and schooling had not been witnessed.<sup>74</sup> On the issue of billeting, the difference between Italian and German POWs was discussed. In their statement the NUAW made clear their opposition to the billeting of German POWs on farms:

In every village throughout the land there have been young men who have had to fight against the Germans. The German have been notably brutal in their prosecution of the war and have not hesitated to violate the international code in respect of civilised war-fare. Now the Ministry of Agriculture proposes to billet these enemy aliens upon the rural population of England and Wales, our people view this proposal with

great dis-favour and they do not think that Prisoners of War should be billeted on farms or in the villages but that they should be kept in camps isolated from the population and should return to their native country as soon as circumstance will permit.<sup>75</sup>

Dukes suggested that German POWs were being foisted on reluctant farm workers who now not only had to work but also live alongside the ex-enemy:

There was not only a domestic difference but a psychological difference as well. There was a public hostility to Germans generally which had not evidenced itself particularly against the Italians and although the principle of billeting of Italians might be accepted, there was not likely to be an acceptance of German prisoners in that connection. Nevertheless a farm worker living in a tied cottage was to a large degree susceptible to the subtle pressure which could be applied on him by his employer.<sup>76</sup>

The MAF explained that the food situation was worse than during the war and they were losing vital supplementary labour from all sections and therefore POW labour was needed now more than ever. In regards to wages, the MAF noted that the Central Wages Board could not originally reach an agreement and a rate of 1/3 per hour had been determined and would be reviewed in March 1946. These rates took into account the need to supervise German POWs and the loss of working time resulting from the need to transport them to and from camps. Contrary to NUAW observations, the MAF stated that the majority of POWs were inexperienced in farm work. Although they were 'willing'

workers, not all had been agricultural workers previously. Williams assured the delegation he would now review the rate of pay before March. 'He could not promise, of course, what would be the result of that review, but he gave assurances that he was desirous, so far as practicable, of meeting the wishes of the agricultural workers'.<sup>77</sup>

Williams explained that billeting was required in connection with milking. As it was a priority and seven-day a week job labour had to be available close to farms, if not accommodated on site with stables and barns used as well as the farmers own home. Italian POWs 'had shown themselves capable of training for milking' and 18,000 had been subsequently billeted. Yet, repatriation was under way and these workers were soon leaving. 'It presented', Williams stated, 'the gravest difficulty at the present time and it was very doubtful if the milk supply could be kept up to its present level in the very near future unless something drastic was done'.<sup>78</sup> The repatriation of the Italians left 'a nasty breach' in the workforce that would have to be filled by other means, in this case German POWs. While he was sympathetic to the different attitude towards Germans he insisted that of the 200 so far billeted their introduction had received written permission from the farmworkers concerned. The MAF noted that district panels had been set up comprising of a farmer, farm workers and independent member who would review complaints. If farmers were shown to have dismissed British workers in order to employ German POWs, all German POWs would be withdrawn immediately. Since German POWs had been employed about 20 complaints had been received but only in two or three cases had the farmer been charged. The MAF had appointed a former NUAW organiser who had been given full power to investigate any dispute or complaint regarding POW employment. So far they had not received any complaints of

billeting. The NUAW had received complaints about the POW panels. The MAF was still instructing farmers to produce food and they had to find labour for that work.

After the meeting adjourned, a short discussion was had between the union representatives and the MOL. The MOL outlined the 'considerable size' of the labour problem and it was estimated that 565,000 POWs were needed in 1946, 245,000 in agriculture. The United States had begun to repatriate their POWs but the British government was 'anxious' to keep some of them here. It was noted that the food situation in Germany was 'most alarming' and while there was a desire to cut the occupation force to 'the absolute minimum' this was impossible to do this while repatriating German POWs 'where they would see the difficult plight of their own families'. Isaacs affirmed that the rate for the job would apply in all industries and he wanted to canvass union attitudes to the introduction of German POWs more broadly.<sup>79</sup> Isaacs 'felt obliged' to tell Dann that the government was proposing to employ double the existing number of POWs in agriculture to ensure the continuation of food production and rationing at the present level.<sup>80</sup>

NUAW concerns over the continued use and intended expansion of POW labour in agriculture were discussed in the press. On 15 January 1946, Percy Izzard reported on the ongoing wages dispute between the MAF and the NUAW/TGWU – what he described as 'a first-class crisis'. While 8,000 agricultural workers were to be released from the forces, the number of young men to be called up from agriculture was to be increased by 5,000. Union demands for a £1 increase had been rejected and wages would remain at £3 10s. The unions stated that if the wage would remain the same 'German prisoners will certainly be regarded as blacklegs'. It was believed that their

presence on the land was affecting their claims.<sup>81</sup> At the same time, farmers were in need of labour. On 28 January 1946, Izzard reported that farmers were 'becoming increasingly anxious about the labour supply' and noted the possibility of more German POWs being employed to replace WLA releases, retirees, call-ups, and Italian POWs being repatriated.<sup>82</sup> Two days later, the *Daily Mail* stated that thousands of additional German POWs, part of an 'army' of 34,000 arriving from Canada, would be made to work in agriculture.<sup>83</sup> On 9 March 1946, it was revealed that 40,000 would arrive from the US and Canada by the end of the month, most being set to work on the land.<sup>84</sup> Across the page, it was reported that forty Land Girls were threatening to resign if evicted from their hostel to make room for eighty German POWs at Cient, North Worcestershire.<sup>85</sup>

On 5 March 1946 Dann wrote to the TUC concerned about the continued employment of POWs in agriculture. He praised the 'helpful support' of the TUC in success of getting the rate for the job for POWs and noted that the NUAW executive had understood the need to employ POWs during the war due to food production. Having learned that greater numbers of POWs were now to be employed on the land, Dann stated that the NUAW membership felt that this would only undermine their position. It also undermined the recent negotiation of POW rates. The NUAW had hoped that this change would 'act as a deterrent upon employers'. Dann reminded the TUC that there were some 160,000 POWs currently employed in agriculture and that it was intended to bring a further 248,000, roughly half the number of regular British farmworkers. The NUAW Executive Committee passed a resolution refusing to accept the continued employment of POWs in agriculture:



This Committee is much concerned with the presence of such a large number of prisoners of war and it is further greatly concerned by the intention to bring more, which it is felt will undermine the position of the British farm worker. Therefore this Executive does not support the continuance of employment of prisoners of war on the land.<sup>86</sup>

#### IV

Dann's letter reveals the central aim of the NUAW deputation: the removal of POW labour from agriculture. NUAW fears that the German POW labour force in agriculture would continue to expand were assuaged a few months later. After mounting criticism in press and parliament of the indefinite detention and continued exploitation of German 'slave labour' in post-war Britain, the Labour government announced that German POWs would be repatriated at a rate of 15,000 per month from October 1946. From this point, User Departments employing German POWs had to frame labour plans on the assumption of a reduction in their availability, including the MOA.<sup>87</sup> The MAF was 'anxious' that the 'implications of repatriation should be fully appreciated' by the government. POWs accounted for twenty per cent of the agricultural workforce, and to ensure that the 1947 harvest was not risked the MOA, supported by the MOL, requested a minimum of 215,000 POWs be retained for the time being and at least 100,000 in 1949.<sup>88</sup> This figure was based on the assumption that 40,000 Polish Resettlement Corps were also made available for agricultural employment. Yet, as the MAF pointed out, trade unions were 'strongly opposed' to the introduction of Poles.<sup>89</sup> While Attlee stated it 'looked inevitable' that POWs would be used for the 1947 harvest, other sources of labour – including

Poles and other foreign workers – would have to be secured in 1948. Faced with the need to commence the repatriation of German POWs while supplying farmers with an adequate workforce, the government hoped that trade unions would 'adopted a more reasonable attitude' towards foreign labour if the shortages of labour were made clear.<sup>90</sup> The sanguine belief that the NUAW would willingly accept foreign labour if the situation was properly explained was mistaken. Instead, it continued the fight against different groups of imported labour that the government secured to alleviate shortages.

Despite assurances that the position of farmworkers would be protected, all foreign labour was opposed by the NUAW. The concerns the union raised towards Poles, European Voluntary Workers (EVW) and Commonwealth migrants were identical to those directed towards POW labour. The recruitment of Poles was a scheme the NUAW believed could only benefit farmers and would undoubtedly lead to the depression of wages. The Executive Committee assured members it would support action they deemed necessary to protect their position and later informed the TUC that it would not agree to the employment of Poles. By the end of 1948, the number of EVWs placed in agriculture peaked at 21,050. It had been argued that only foreigners would tolerate agricultural work. To farmworkers this argument was used to skirt around the issue of improvement in living standards. It was feared that EVWs and other foreign labour were not regarded as a temporary supplement but a permanent substitute to British workers as it was proposed was that they were integrated into agricultural life, eventually being naturalised. The urgent needs of rural communities would be overlooked, as foreign labour, willing to work despite low living standards, would be increasingly employed.<sup>91</sup> In reality, EVW labour did little to solve the problems facing agriculture. There was a high

wastage rate with many leaving the industry. EVW's cited low wages, the heaviness of work, housing difficulties and the desire to join friends in the towns' as principal reasons for leaving.<sup>92</sup>

Finally, the NUAW rejected MOL overtures concerning Commonwealth immigrants. On 30 October 1947, Alfred Dann wrote to the MOL: 'We appreciate of course that these people are human beings, but it would seem evident that to bring coloured labour into the British countryside would be a most unwise and unfortunate act'. Taking a more forceful line, on 8 December 1947, Dann emphasised: 'You will appreciate that our people have already put up with a great deal, we have had COs, POWs, Poles and EVWs thrust upon us, and if coloured labour was imported, it would prove to be the last straw'.<sup>93</sup>

The recruitment of foreign labour was seen as a way to avoid the issue of improving the lot of the farm worker. In June 1946, T. C. Batley, Secretary of the Godstone Branch of the NUAW, wrote to *The Times* concerned with the future of the recruitment of agricultural labour. As a foreman and union secretary, Batley had worked with every type of farm labour over the past five years. He noted the negative effect of the introduction of 'cheap, conscribed labour' such as WLA, POWs, and internees on union members. Through force, he admitted, and the 'moral compulsion of war', sufficient labour had been retained on the land during the 1939-45 conflict. The failure to recruit labour and the reluctance of former farmworkers to return to the land showed quite clearly the future of agricultural in the free labour market:

The claim that wages and conditions in agriculture are comparable with those in other industries will not bear the most cursory examination. Only a Minister with the courage to short-circuit the filibustering machinery of

the Agricultural Wages Board, as Mr. Bevin did in 1940, to afford workers of ability and energy without capital a reasonable prospect of making good, and to show a real determination to raise rural standards of water supply, sanitation, and household appointments can hope to arrest the present decline in workmanship and output per man-hour. In agriculture, as in other industries, neither force labour nor increased mechanization, nor the material appeal of an open-air life, can adequately take the place of ordinary economic inducements.<sup>94</sup>

In his view, satisfactory wages were central to the quest to recruit labour to the land. He believed that the wartime trend of improved wages would continue but it would be misleading to consider this a huge improvement. Bately's hopes would not materialise in post-war Britain and the gains the NUAW had achieved during the war would quickly dissipate. There was an expectation that the post-war government would neglect agriculture. In 1941, Mass-Observation quizzed their national panel of volunteers about their concerns over post-war employment. The outlook was bleak, with depression and job losses anticipated. This outlook was based on the experience following the Great War. In regards to agriculture, there was a 'unanimous and comprehensive' expectation that it would be 'let-down' by the post-war government. 'They'll forget about us again after the fuss is over', a 45 year-old farm worker stated. 'They'll pay us less and send us back to our holes'. Farmers were similarly apprehensive, with one proclaiming that 'history will repeat itself and that after the war there will be a big agricultural slump'. The report concluded that there was 'an almost universal belief' that an agricultural

recession would follow the war, and that the future government would offer little in the way of support.<sup>95</sup>

Gooch was well aware that interest in agriculture would wane after the war, as it had done after 1918. As Howkins has shown, after closing the gap during the 1940s, agricultural wages fell in 1950s/60s and in the period between 1949 and 1955 they declined. Furthermore, despite hopes for improved housing for agricultural workers, the number of tied cottages increased. In 1948, 34 per cent of farmworkers had a tied cottage; by 1955 this had increased to 55 per cent. Perhaps now more than ever there was a need for an agricultural trade union but membership drastically declined. In 1968 the NUAW added the suffix 'Allied' and in 1982 joined with the TGWU. By 1982, when the NUAW and TGWU merged, creating the NUAAW, it had less than 67,000 members and by 1990 only 37,000. In line with declining membership, local branches closed and recruitment stagnated at those that remained.<sup>96</sup> While Reg Groves painted an optimistic picture in 1948, and although the NUAW would go on to succeed in championing certain causes, it was a declining force.

## V

The NUAW adopted a rigid line against the continued employment of POWs in post-war Britain. Having tolerated POW labour as an unwanted but necessary source of supplementary labour during the war, the Executive Committee refused to accept their prolonged presence on the land. The NUAW feared that the presence of POW labour undermined the union's central goals of improving wages and conditions in agriculture. Resistance to POW labour in post-war Britain must be placed within the wider context of union concerns towards

foreign labour. As this article has indicated, the same concerns of displacement and wage depression were raised against Poles and EVWs. This article has therefore demonstrated that the issue of POW employment was not one confined to the need to source supplementary labour during and immediately after the Second World War. Rather, the employment of POWs labour in British agriculture intersected with long-term issues facing agricultural labour recruitment: low wages and poor conditions. It also highlights that the wartime and post-war governments sought to consult the NUAW regarding the issue of POW employment. Furthermore, it continued to hope that if the situation regarding the need for foreign labour was properly explained that the unions would adopt a more reasonable attitude. Throughout the wartime and post-war period of POW employment ministers hoped that by explaining the severe problems in the agricultural labour supply the NUAW would take up a more realistic posture towards the employment foreign labourers.

To the union, however, the use of POWs and foreign labour in the short-term allowed the government to skirt around the issue of the long-term recruitment of British workers to agriculture. The issue was not one of just cheap labour displacing British workers but of the wider problems facing agricultural recruitment. While the contribution of POW labour is celebrated, the necessity of it betrays the historic problems of agricultural recruitment in Britain. The debates over the use of POW and foreign labour in post-war agriculture which this article has focused on also resonate with current disputes over the undercutting of British workers' pay by migrant labour from the European Union as well as concerns over the future of agricultural labour in relation to Brexit.

Finally, the NUAW statement to the Ministers of Agriculture and Labour evidenced, or at least attempted to, corrupt practices in the provision of POW

labourers. The extent of corruption within the bureaucracy of POW employment remains to be evaluated. While the NUAW presented scant evidence of farmers seeking to cheat in order to get cheaper labour, this issue requires further investigation. In February 1948, Sidney Dye (Lab. MP South West Norfolk) spoke out in parliament concerning 'irregularities in the control of prisoner of war labour amounting to corruption'.<sup>97</sup> It had transpired that an official on the Norfolk Agriculture Executive Committee had used POW labour to repair and redecorate their home while another had used it for the cultivation of their garden, all of which went unpaid.

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Debate, 17 October 1946, vol. 427, cols. 1110-4.

<sup>2</sup> Johann Custodis, 'Employing the enemy: the contribution of German and Italian Prisoners of War to British agriculture during and after the Second World War', *Agricultural History Review*, 60/2 (2012), pp. 243-65 (p. 260)

<sup>3</sup> Alan Armstrong, *Farmworkers: A Social and Economic History 1770-1980* (London, 1988), pp. 204-11

<sup>4</sup> Nicola Verdon, *Working the Land: A History of the Farmworker in England from 1850 to the Present Day* (Basingstoke, 2017), pp. 189-222. On schoolchildren see, R. J. Moore-Colyer, 'Kids in the Corn: School Harvest Camps and Farm Labour Supply in England, 1940-50', *Agricultural History Review*, 52/2 (2004), pp. 183-206

<sup>5</sup> Alun Howkins, *The Death of Rural England: A Social History of the Countryside Since 1900* (London, 2003), pp. 120-22

<sup>6</sup> Custodis, 'Employing the Enemy', pp. 250-53

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- <sup>7</sup> For instance: K. A. H. Murray *Agriculture* (London, 1955); B.A Holderness, *British Agriculture since 1945* (Manchester, 1985)
- <sup>8</sup> Bob Moore, 'Turning Liabilities into Assets: British Government Policy towards German and Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 32/1 (1997), pp. 117-136
- <sup>9</sup> Custodis, 'Employing the enemy'. See also, idem, 'The Enemy on the Farm: The Economic Contribution of German and Italian POW Employment in Britain and the British Dominions during and after the Second World War', *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte/Economic History Yearbook*, 55/2 (2014), pp. 99-128
- <sup>10</sup> Bob Moore and Kent Fedorowich, *The British Empire and its Italian POWs, 1940-1947*, (Basingstoke, 2002), pp. 24-5, pp. 28-34
- <sup>11</sup> Inge Weber-Newth and Johannes-Dieter Steinert, *German Migrants in Post-War Britain: An Enemy Embrace*, (Oxford, 2006), pp. 24-5
- <sup>12</sup> Custodis, 'Employing the Enemy', p. 257
- <sup>13</sup> Richard Moore-Colyer, 'Prisoners of war and the struggle for food production', in eds, Brian Short, Charles Watkins and John Martin, *The Front Line of Freedom: British Farming in the Second World War*, (Exeter: British Agricultural History Society, 2006), pp. 117-131, p.129
- <sup>14</sup> Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1992), p. 218
- <sup>15</sup> Reg Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle!: The History of the Farm Workers' Union* (London, 1949) p. 229
- <sup>16</sup> Peter Self and Herbert J. Storing, *The State and the Farmer* (Los Angeles, 1963), p. 159
- <sup>17</sup> Groves, *Sharpen the Sickle!* p. 218



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<sup>18</sup> Bob Wynn, *Skilled at all trades: The History of the Farmworkers' Union* (London, 1993)

<sup>19</sup> Nicolas Mansfield, *English Farmworkers and Local Patriotism, 1900-1930* (London, 2001); Clare V. J. Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside: The Politics of Rural Britain 1918-1939* (Oxford, 2007)

<sup>20</sup> Alun Howkins, *Poor Labour Men: Rural Radicalism in Norfolk 1872-1923* (London, 1985)

<sup>21</sup> Howard Newby, *The Deferential Worker: A Study of Farm Workers in East Anglia* (Harmondsworth, 1979), p. 209

<sup>22</sup> Griffiths, *Labour and the Countryside*, p. 190

<sup>23</sup> On the interwar reorganisation of the TUC see, V. L. Allen 'The Re-organisation of the Trades Union Congress, 1918-1927', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 11/1 (1960), pp. 24-43

<sup>24</sup> Newby, *Deferential Worker*, p. 236.

<sup>25</sup> HC Deb, 11 March 1940, vol. 358, col. 824.

<sup>26</sup> Francis Adeney, 'I was fond of my prisoners', *Lancashire Evening Post*, 5 January 1940, p. 4

<sup>27</sup> 'Observations by a Farmer', *Sussex Express & Courier*, 1 September 1939, p. 2

<sup>28</sup> HC Deb, 20 February 1940, col. 357, cols. 1138-9

<sup>29</sup> Moore and Fedorowich, *Italian POWs*, p. 28

<sup>30</sup> CAB 67/7 WP (G) (40) 170, Internees and Prisoners of War, Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council, 2 July 1940.

<sup>31</sup> CAB 67/9 WP (G) (41) 6, Italian Prisoners of War for Land Reclamation Work, Memorandum by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, 13 January 1941.

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<sup>32</sup> CAB 66/16, WP (41) 120, Proposal to bring 25,000 Italian Prisoners of War to this country, Report by the Lord President of the Council, 4 June 1941; CAB 65/18 WM 57 (41) 9, 5 June 1941

<sup>33</sup> HC Deb, 7 August 1941, vol. 373, cols. 2089-90

<sup>34</sup> HC Deb, 3 December 1942, vol. 385, cols. 1296-300

<sup>35</sup> 'Italian Prisoners on Cycles', *The Times*, 9 April 1943, p. 2

<sup>36</sup> Moore-Coyler, 'Prisoners of war', p. 124

<sup>37</sup> Verdon, *Working the Land*, pp. 211-3

<sup>38</sup> Brian Short, *The Battle of the Fields: Rural Community and Authority in Britain during the Second World War* (Woodbridge, 2014), p. 78

<sup>39</sup> Custodis, 'Employing the Enemy', p. 246

<sup>40</sup> Kent Fedorowich and Bob Moore, 'Co-Belligerency and Prisoners of War: Britain and Italy, 1943-1945', *International History Review*, 18/1 (1996), pp. 28-47

<sup>41</sup> CAB 66/45 WP (44) 36, Employment of Prisoners of War in the United Kingdom, Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council, 18 January 1944

<sup>42</sup> Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick (hereafter MRC), MSS.292/881.423/7, J.C.C. 120, 'Joint Consultative Committee: Employment of Italian Skilled Prisoners of War in Great Britain'

<sup>43</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, 'Extract From: Minutes of Fifth Meeting of the Minister of Labour's Joint Consultative Committee, General Council Side', 10 February 1944

<sup>44</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, Walter Citrine, TUC General Secretary to the Secretaries of Certain Affiliated Unions, 'The Employment of Italian Prisoners of War', 28 November 1944.

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<sup>45</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, MOL JCC (General Council Side), 'Employment of Italian Prisoners of War', 12 December 1944

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Land Worker*, January 1945, p. 9

<sup>50</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, 'Subject: Armed Forces: Prisoners Of War: History of Case'

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> Percy Izzard, 'Britons Face Sack to Let in Germans', *Daily Mail*, 9 January 1945, p. 1

<sup>53</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, Extract from the Minutes of the M.O.L. J.C.C. (G. C. side), 'Employment of Italian Prisoners of War in Great Britain', 20 March 1945

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, MOL. Circ. 28/525, 'Employment of Prisoners of War', 23 August 1945

<sup>58</sup> Verdon, *Working the Land*, p. 212

<sup>59</sup> Bob Moore, 'Unruly Allies: British Problems with the French Treatment of Axis Prisoners of War, 1943-1945', *War in History*, 7/2 (2000), pp.180-198

<sup>60</sup> CAB 66/58 WP (44) 655, Prisoners of War Captured in Western Europe Since 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for War, 16 November 1944

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<sup>61</sup> CAB 66/58 WP (44) 687, Transfer of Italian Prisoners to this country and increased employment of German prisoners, Note by the Minister of Labour and National Service, 24 November 1944

<sup>62</sup> CAB 65/44 WM 160 (44) 5, 30 November 1944

<sup>63</sup> *Land Worker*, August 1945, p. 2

<sup>64</sup> Murray, *Agriculture*, p. 222

<sup>65</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, Extract from minutes of the M.O.L.J.C.C. (G.C. Side) 1, 'Employment of Prisoners of War in Agriculture', 20 November 1945

<sup>66</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, 'Statement to be presented to Ministers of Agriculture and Labour on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup>, January 1946: Prisoners of War on the Land'

<sup>67</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Ministers were aware of this. In a letter to Bevin, Isaacs had noted that employers benefited from not having to pay National Insurance contributions when employing POW labourers. Moore and Fedorowich, *Italian POWs*, p. 216

<sup>69</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/8, 'Statement to be presented to Ministers of Agriculture and Labour on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup>, January 1946: Prisoners of War on the Land'

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, 'Employment of Prisoners of War in Agriculture: Report of Deputation to Ministers of Labour and Agriculture on Tuesday, January 22, At House of Commons, Commencing at 3-15 P.M.', p. 2

<sup>74</sup> Armstrong, *Farmworkers*, pp. 219-221

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<sup>75</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/8, 'Statement to be presented to Ministers of Agriculture and Labour on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1946: Prisoners of War on the Land'

<sup>76</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, 'Employment of Prisoners of War in Agriculture: Report of Deputation to Ministers of Labour and Agriculture on Tuesday, January 22, At House of Commons, Commencing at 3-15 P.M.', p. 2

<sup>77</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5

<sup>79</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 9-11

<sup>80</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, MOLJCC (G.C. Side) 4/1, 'Employment of German Prisoners of War in Agriculture', 19 February 1946

<sup>81</sup> Percy Izzard, 'Farm hands threaten wages strike', *Daily Mail*, 15 January 1946, p. 4

<sup>82</sup> Percy Izzard, 'A Problem for the Farmers', *Daily Mail*, 28 January 1946, p. 3

<sup>83</sup> '34,000 Germans for Britain', *Daily Mail*, 30 January 1946, p. 1

<sup>84</sup> '40,000 for the Land', *Daily Mail*, 9 March 1946, p. 3

<sup>85</sup> 'Evicted—for prisoners', *Daily Mail*, 9 March 1946, p. 4

<sup>86</sup> MRC, MSS.292/881.423/7, Letter from Dann to TUC, 'Prisoners of War', 5 March 1946

<sup>87</sup> CAB 128/6/17 CM 79 (46)1, 4 September, 1946

<sup>88</sup> CAB 129/12/32 CP (46) 332, Repatriation of German Prisoners of War from the United Kingdom, Memorandum by the Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2 September 1946.

<sup>89</sup> CAB 129/12/32 CP (46) 332, Repatriation of German Prisoners of War from the United Kingdom, Memorandum by the Joint Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, 2 September 1946

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<sup>90</sup> CAB 128/6/17 CM 79 (46)1, 4 September, 1946

<sup>91</sup> Elizabeth Stadulis, 'The resettlement of displaced persons in the United Kingdom', *Journal of Demography*, 5/3 (1952), pp. 207-37, p. 222

<sup>92</sup> John Allan Tannahill, *European Voluntary Workers in Britain* (Manchester, 1958), p. 78

<sup>93</sup> Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island: Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971* (Oxford, 2016). fnt. 297, p. 392. Holmes cites PRO LAB 43/12

<sup>94</sup> T. C. Batley, 'Farm Work and Wages', *The Times*, 3 June 1946, p. 5

<sup>95</sup> MOA, FR 857, 'Postwar Jobs', September 1941, pp. 6-7

<sup>96</sup> Howkins, *Death of Rural England*, p. 173

<sup>97</sup> HC Deb 3 February 1948, vol. 446, cols. 1765-76