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**Potbank and Union:**

**A Study of Work and Trade Unionism  
in the Pottery Industry, 1900-1924**

**by**

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## Summary

The thesis analyses work and trade unionism in the pottery industry between 1900-1924. It explores the structural influences on work and unionism and the experience of the people involved. The main contextual features studied include: the industrial framework; ceramic technology and production; the social relations of the workplace; the union's origins and growth; employer action and the potters' relationship with the community, labour movement and state. The study demonstrates how social and economic relations moulded perceptions and that individuals could shape those relations.

There are five sections. The first shows the industry's economic structure was the principal determinant of the potter's work. Past industrial development conditioned responses to the events of the 1900-1924 period. Worker and management actions are related to the variety of markets and technology. Secondly, an examination of the production process reveals the sectionalism of the industry's internal relations which affected the potters' attempts at collective organization. Thirdly the evolution of trade unionism and its amalgamated form are explained. Initially the union was craft dominated but during the period came to reflect the composite workforce's response to industrial change. The workgroup, the family and local loyalties formed the basis of union organization. Fourthly, management's desire to control production had a major impact on work and union experience. Industrial bargaining and conflict reinforced the sectionalism of the workforce and the fragmentation of the union. Finally, the class consciousness and political attitudes of the potters resulted from the interaction of workplace and community and were also modified by the potters' relations with other classes, the labour movement and the state.

The period constitutes a discontinuity in the development of the Potteries given the changes which occurred in technology, capital and labour organizations and industrial relations. The thesis is the first account of work and unionism in this era of the pottery industry's history and challenges orthodox interpretations of the technical and social aspects of pottery manufacture. It seeks to understand the social basis of work and trade unionism and to broaden the historical study of women workers, industrial disease and the intersection of home, work and trade unionism.

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Abbreviations

- CATU Coll. - Ceramic and Allied Trade Union Collection.
- D (followed by number) - Document from CATU Coll.
- HBL - Horace Barks Reference Library, Hanley
- 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup> - Report of the Departmental Committee on the use of Lead in the Manufacture of Earthenware and China 1910
- L (followed by number) - Letter from CATU Coll.
- MRC - Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick
- NCPI - National Council of the Pottery Industry
- NAS - National Amalgamated Society of Male and Female Pottery Workers, the potters' union title from 1906-1917
- NSJFS - North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies
- NSPW - National Society of Pottery Workers, the potters' union title from May, 1917
- P. Gazette - The Pottery Gazette
- PRO - Public Records Office, Kew
- S. Advertiser - The Staffordshire Advertiser
- SRO - Staffordshire Record Office
- S. Sentinel - The Staffordshire Sentinel
- Times I.F.T. Supplement - The Times Imperial and Foreign Trade Supplement
- US. Report 1915 - Department of Commerce. Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce. Misc. Series No. 21. The Pottery Industry (Washington 1915).



## Preface

I have incurred many debts of gratitude during my research, which I must repay. My thanks go to the staff of the university libraries of Warwick, Cambridge and Oxford; Birmingham Central Library; the British Museum; the British Library of Political and Economic Science; the Horace Barks Library; and the William Salt Library. The Gladstone Pottery Museum, the Dyson Perrins Museum, the Modern Records Centre, the Staffordshire Record Office, the Public Records Office and their directors and staff have all been extremely helpful.

A number of individuals gave me valuable assistance. John Briggs, Dr. Malcolm Nixon, Muffi Fox and Frank Botham shared their knowledge of the pottery industry and the Potteries with me. My discussions with Liz Brown and Dr. Margarite Dupree on our common field of research were particularly useful. The participants at the social history seminars at Cambridge, Keele and Birmingham universities; the staff seminar at the Industrial Relations Research Unit, Warwick and the Maastricht, Anglo-Dutch Labour History Conference, 1982 are warmly thanked for their comments and criticisms on my work. The staff and students at the Centre for the Study of Social History gave help and advice freely during my research.

I remain eternally grateful to the Ceramic and Allied Trades Union and their head office staff in Hanley. They provided me with every possible help during my period of study and lightened the long days spent in their basement. Moreover, they did so while they and their members were experiencing the effects of a recession similar in intensity to the one I was examining which occurred at the beginning of this century.

Professor Royden Harrison provided me with continued advice and encouragement. I warmly appreciate the care and attention given to the manuscript by Deirdre Hewitt and commend her high standards of typing. It was my privilege to have Dr. Tony Mason as a supervisor: even if our modes of analysis differ I hope my standards have met his.

Anne Whipp alone knows best the contribution she made to my period of research.

## Introduction

This is a study of the pottery workers of Staffordshire, their working lives and their trade unions in the period 1900-1924. Work is a significant part of people's existence, yet how the potters experienced work and its changes in the early 20th century has gone largely unchronicled. What follows is an attempt to remedy that neglect. The struggle for trade union organization remains one of the most important creative acts of working people. The story of the formation and growth of the first national union of pottery workers accords well with this view and provides a distinctive chapter in the history of modern British unionism.

The concentration of six factory towns in the thirty square miles of North Staffordshire known as the Potteries, was one of the notable products of Britain's industrialization.<sup>1</sup> The Potteries has remained an enduring feature of its manufacturing industry, social geography and modern industrial landscape. Much of what the outside world knows of North Staffordshire is based on generalised comments concentrating on its staple product, pottery.<sup>2</sup> A number of dominant images and assumptions about potters and the Potteries have become established. Pottery manufacture is supposed to have been technologically backward and

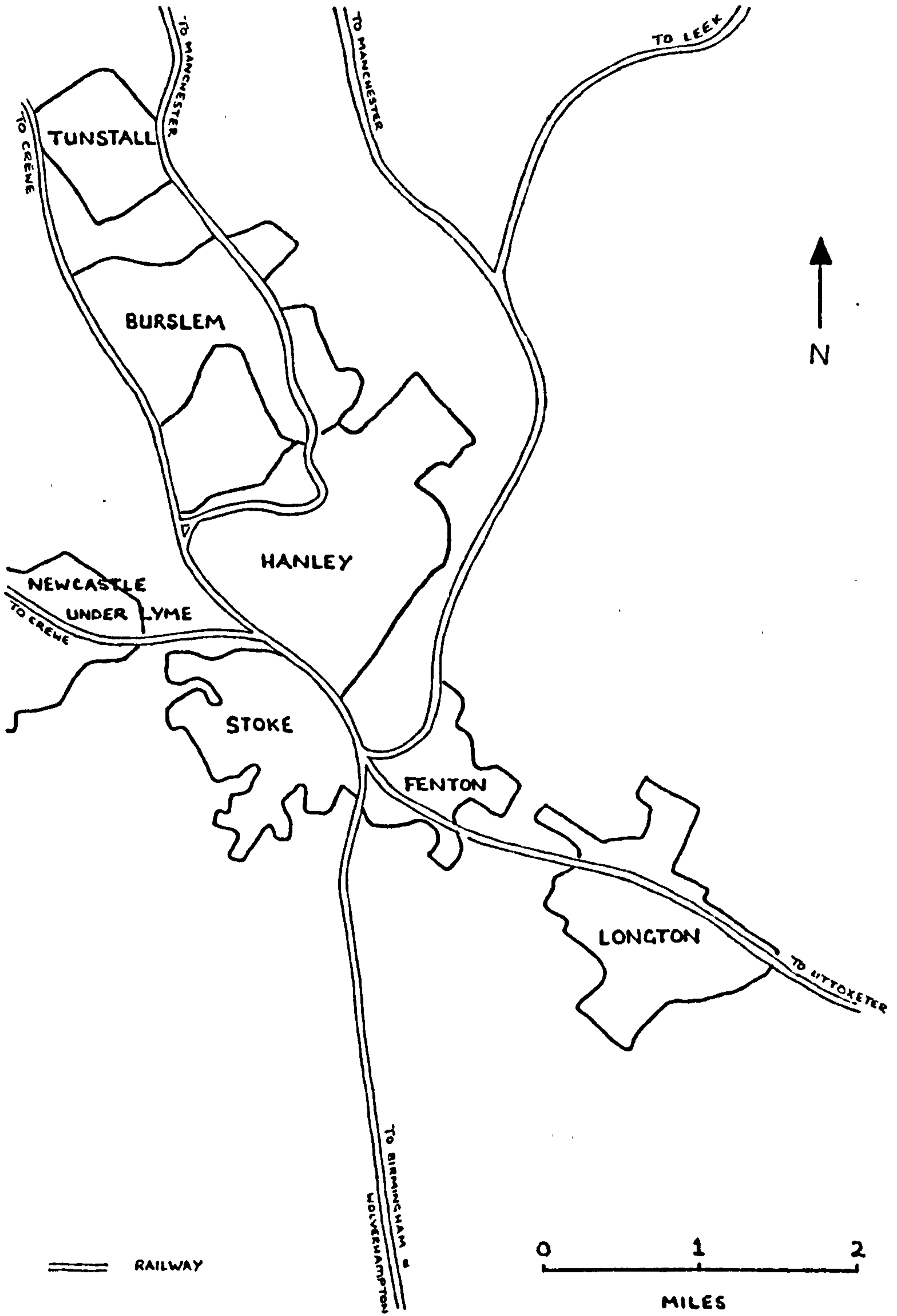
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1. J. Thomas, The Rise of the Staffordshire Potteries (Bath. 1971) p 3. A. Briggs, Iron Bridge to Crystal Palace, Impact and Images of the Industrial Revolution (1980), p. 61. Place of publication is London unless otherwise stated. The Potteries was the collective name for the Six Towns, made up of Tunstall, Burslem, Hanley, Stoke, Fenton and Longton: potteries is the plural of a pottery. The local term for a pottery was a potbank or 'bank'. The term 'potter' described a worker or employer, but usually the former, Stoke on Trent refers to the total area of the Six Towns, Stoke upon Trent to the town of Stoke only. See also Glossary below.

2. A. Moyes, The Potteries in P.A. Wood, Industrial Britain. The West Midlands (1970), p 188.

Map

The Potteries 1900, Showing the Six Towns and Newcastle under Lyme from the 1" OS Map, Sheet 123, Stoke-on-Trent.



unchanging; managerial technique is thought of as unsophisticated; in the 20th century the industry is said to have failed to respond to foreign competition leading to a period of long term decline. Perhaps the most well known characteristics of the industry concern the apparently friendly relations of employer and worker, the absence of trade unions and the basically peaceful industrial relations.<sup>3</sup> The success of Arnold Bennett, the local born writer, and his novels based on the area have strengthened many of these images.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, one of the tasks of this investigation into the pottery industry is to test these by now traditional assumptions. The Potteries in fact exhibited a rich diversity of industrial and social experience which the traditional views fail to capture. A local man pointed out in 1892 that 'when an effort is made to treat as a whole such a complicated and varied calling as the potters it is next to impossible to avoid discrepancies'. At the end of the period in 1924, Sydney Dodd, the manufacturer, concluded that 'the pottery trade is a peculiarly complicated industry'.<sup>5</sup>

Of the works on the pottery industry covering any part of this period, very few examine the potter's work experience in detail or attempt to explain the forms and functions of trade unionism. Charles Shaw's personal account of employment in the industry concentrates on the 19th century.<sup>6</sup> Harold Owen's The Staffordshire Potter focusses on what

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3. B.R. Williams, The Pottery Industry, in D. Burn (ed.), The Structure of British Industry (Cambridge 1958), National Institute of Economic and Social Research, Economic and Social Studies XV, pp.292-319. J.B. Priestley, An English Journey (1934), pp.202 and 204. W. Yeoman, The Geographical Factors Influencing the Major Changes in the Pottery Industry of North Staffordshire, 1945-1965, Unpublished MA thesis University of London, 1968, pp.142 and 150.

4. A. Bennett, Anna of the Five Towns (1902); The Grim Smile of the Five Towns (1907); The Matador of the Five Towns (1912) and These Twain (1916).

5. The Pottery Gazette, 1 June 1891 local correspondent. S. Dodd to the 1924 Wage Inquiry p.75, CATU Coll, see footnote 27.

6. C Shaw, When I was a Child, by an old potter (1903).

he saw were the main events of the century; principally the strikes of 1834, 1836-1837, 1881 and 1900, the emigration movement and the history of the arbitration board from 1868-1891.<sup>7</sup> Warburton's analysis of trade union organization is in many ways a minor classic of research.<sup>8</sup> For the first time he mapped out a number of changes in trade, technology, skill and social relations in the potbank and connected them to a clear narrative of craft union development. His period of inquiry ends effectively in 1900. John Thomas, in a less well known piece, gives a broad overview of the historical development of trade unionism in the Potteries.<sup>9</sup> He sketches the growth and changes in the union between 1900-1921, including the formation of the National Amalgamated Society of Male and Female Pottery Workers in 1906, the expansion in membership in the First World War and the relative decline in the depressed trading of the 1920s. Burchill and Ross attempted to bring Warburton's history up to date.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, in their account the period 1900-1920 is not seen as distinctive and they confine themselves largely to an institutional report of union evolution and official action. Most of the writers give little space to the important subjects of company form, female employment and the relations of the potters to their community. In contrast this analysis will pay attention to each of these subjects as well as highlighting the social experience of work and its connexion with trade unionism.

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7. H. Owen, The Staffordshire Potter (1901).

8. W. Warburton, The History of Trade Union Organization in the North Staffordshire Potteries (1931). See also F. Hodgkinson, W. Warburton: A Pottery Worker-Historian, (ND), Horace Barks Reference Library.

9. J. Thomas, Trade Unionism in the Potteries, in, G.D.H. Cole (ed.), British Trade Unionism Today (1939), Section 21.

10. F. Burchill and R. Ross, A History of the Potters' Union (CATU, Hanley 1977).

The potters and the Potteries are worthy of study for a number of reasons. The North Staffordshire Potteries are an excellent example of what has been termed 'an isolatable case study which offers scope for intensive investigation'.<sup>11</sup> The area's boundaries were well-defined and the Six Towns remained relatively isolated. They were quite separate from the industries of Liverpool or Wolverhampton. In relation to the adjacent regions North Staffordshire would not be included with Manchester to the north or Birmingham and the Black Country to the south.<sup>12</sup> Whilst the study remains local it provides a clear case against which one may compare the general interpretations of industrial life. Secondly, in common with other regions the Potteries was an example of marked industrial concentration. In 1811, nine tenths of the population of Burslem was employed in or connected with the pottery industry. The level of concentration continued into the 20th century. In 1911, almost 47,000 of the total area's workforce of 111,806 were directly employed in the pottery industry.<sup>13</sup> In 1918 it was said that 'the position of North Staffordshire depended largely upon the pottery trade, the people having no means of obtaining other work in the district.'<sup>14</sup> The Potteries provide therefore an excellent opportunity to examine the close overlap of work and community.

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11. F. Thistlethwaite, The Atlantic migration of the pottery industry, Economic History Review, 2nd series Vol.XI, No.2, 1958, p.265.

12. A.H. Morgan, Regional consciousness in the North Staffordshire Potteries, Geography, March, 1942, pp.94-100.

13. S. Beaver, The Potteries: a study in the evolution of a cultural landscape, Institute of British Geographers, Transactions and Papers, No.34, June 1964, pp.1-31. The Staffordshire Census, 1901, p.69, 1911, p.65 and 1921 p.54. Employment in the industry was:

	<u>1901</u>	<u>1911</u>	<u>1921</u>
m:	25,203	23,048	23,317
f.	<u>21,248</u>	<u>23,441</u>	<u>28,662</u>
Total	40,451	46,489	51,979

14. The Times, 1 August, 1918, p.10.

Thirdly one of the prevailing images of the Potteries is highly negative and has distorted the history of the potters. Outside observers in particular have concentrated on what they call the 'ugliness' of the industrial landscape, the monotony of the architecture and the 'squalor' which made up 'the total environmental image of a Victorian industrial city'.<sup>15</sup> Richard Crossman's opinion can be taken as an example of this negative view. He wrote in his diary in February 1965:

Here is this huge, ghastly conurbation of five towns ... if one spent billions on this ghastly collection of slag heaps, pools of water, old potteries, deserted coal mines, there would be nothing to show for the money. There is nothing in Stoke except the worst of the industrial revolution and some of the nicest people in the world.<sup>16</sup>

One of the themes of this study will be to show that previous authors have been far too sweeping in their judgements. Undoubtedly the Potteries suffered all the disadvantages of 'precocious urbanisation' yet that should not blind one to the richness of the potters' industrial culture and varieties of local communal life.<sup>17</sup>

Fourthly, the period 1900-1924 has been chosen since it displays a range of events and features of especial concern to the labour historian. Periodisation is an unnatural and arbitrary exercise: the historical experience of workers does not pay attention to these artificial limits.<sup>18</sup> However, the period in question was arguably

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15. H. Owen, The Staffordshire Potter, Appendix V, p.341. G. Tuckwell, 'Commercial manslaughter', Nineteenth Century, August 1898, p.253. A. Bennett, 'The people of the Potteries', Cassells Magazine, 11 Jan., p.1. G. Manners, Regional Development in Britain (Chichester 1980), p.231. W.G. Hoskins, The Making of the English Landscape (1955), p.174. N. Pevsner, Staffordshire (1974), p.252.

16. R. Crossman, The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Vol. I (1975) p.151.

17. D. Landes, The Unbound Prometheus (Cambridge 1969), p.336. L. Allison, 'The Potteries', New Society, Vol. 53, No. 932, 25 Sept., 1980, pp. 622-623.

18. R. Samuel, 'History Workshop Methods', History Workshop, No. 9, Spring 1980, p.175.

decisive for the history of labour in Britain and in the Potteries. Between 1880-1920 the modern British trade union movement was created.<sup>19</sup> The middle years of the period have been described as 'one of crisis in the strict sense of marking a decisive juncture or pass, the outcome of which served as a turning point in the making of modern Britain'. The first three decades of the 20th Century saw, for example, the introduction of new technology and methods of working, a sharp growth of union coverage and membership, and episodes of intense industrial conflict.<sup>20</sup> In the Potteries, the period was equally one of major change. During these years an amalgamated industrial union was established after almost 100 years of multiple craft unionism. A federation of manufacturers was created and industry-wide collective bargaining attempted. The formation of the National Council of the Pottery Industry in 1917 was described as 'epoch-making'.<sup>21</sup> Key alterations in the organization of work led to a series of disputes. Workforce and employers were an integral part of the development of an independent Labour party and the period ended in 1924 with the election of the first working potter to Parliament.

These were years when the 'labour question' became a national pre-occupation. In the Webbs' view the trade unions became a scapegoat for the apparent failure of English manufacturers to hold their own against foreign competition. By 1917 a separate ministry had been created for labour issues.<sup>22</sup> In the Potteries in 1907, Noah Parkes, organizer in the potters' union and secretary of the North Staffordshire Labour Council

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19. E. Hobsbawm, Labour's Turning Point (1948), p.xiii and Trade union history, Economic History Review, 2nd Series, Vol.XX., No.2, 1967, pp.358 and 260.

20. K Burgess, The Challenge of Labour (1980), p.113. J.E. Cronin, Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain (1979), p.93-113.

21. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1917, p.796.

22. S.and B. Webb, Industrial Democracy, (1902. 1913 edn.), p.xxvii. Burgess, op. cit. p.176.



celebrated the council's highest membership to date which combined with the 'closest ever support and concerted actions of local unions for many years'. In April, 1909, the major difficulty for pottery employers was said to be 'labour questions' and 1911 was described as a year of 'serious labour crisis'.<sup>23</sup> During the crises of the period some of the main elements of pottery work were shaped and reinforced in forms which have remained in the industry ever since. For example, there are basic similarities between the 1977 'Wage Structure' and agreements and the results of the 1924 wage inquiry.<sup>24</sup> Skill differentials, the high variability of piece work, waiting time, allowances and a range of trade customs are common to both. An examination of this key period in the past may aid our understanding of the industry in the present.

In order to explore and explain the pottery industry, the working lives of the potters and the nature of their trade unions in the early 20th century, use will be made of analytical insights developed by both labour and social historians. Hobsbawm suggested that 'we stand in equal need of the techniques for the observation and analysis in depth of specific individuals, small groups, and situations, which have also been pioneered outside history, and which may be adaptable to our purposes'.<sup>25</sup> Therefore in chapter 2 for example, Sayles'<sup>26</sup> analysis of workgroups is found to be especially relevant to an examination of pottery production since work in the potbank was organised around this basic social unit. Concepts

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23. The Staffordshire Advertiser, 2 Feb., 1907, p.5. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1901, p.321 and 1 April, 1911, p.399

24. The Wage Structure of the Pottery Industry (Hanley 1977). National Council of the Pottery Industry, Wage Negotiations 1924, Report of Special Committee of Inquiry, Hanley 1924).

25. E. Hobsbawm, From social history to the history of society, in, M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout Essays in Social History (1974) p.7. L.R. Sayles, Behaviour of Industrial Work Groups. Prediction and Control (New York 1958).

of technology, control and community are also discussed and used to investigate the details of work through to the wider social setting of trade unionism. The uncritical use of models from outside of history or the transferring of concepts from the context in which they are developed back into separate periods of history is dangerous. At each stage in the analysis therefore the explanatory value of notions such as paternalism or incorporation are tested against the historical experience of the potters.

In broad terms the aim is to analyse the structural influences on the potters as workers and unionists as well as the process of their individual or collective historical experience. On the one hand we will examine the economic and social constraints on the potters: the structure of their industry; the technology and the nature of the production process; the organization of the union and the forms of employer action. But the pottery workers consciously interpreted the situations derived from these structural features and they constructed their own definitions of work and collective action. Therefore the thoughts and actions of the pottery operative will be reconstructed as well as their attitudes and values to work. Social and economic relations moulded workers' actions yet workers had the ability to in turn influence and shape those relations. Moreover, a dynamic was involved whereby the structural forces and the perceptions and actions of individuals continuously affected each other. Pottery workers constantly reacted to the changing limitations placed upon them by the organization of their industry: as workers and trade unionists they sought to modify these constraints. For example, the individual's behaviour was clearly influenced by his location within the division of labour. However, as a member of a workgroup or family network he might well be able to directly alter his experience of toil and enhance his ability to control his job.

A prime concern is to uncover the informal activities of the pottery worker and the rank and file union member in this period. Workers, especially women, have left few records of their past and a reconstruction of their thoughts and actions has always proved difficult. In the potters' case certain sources make the task easier. The Potteries was well served by the local newspapers and an exceptionally detailed trade journal. A large body of parliamentary papers and official statistics on the pottery industry was published from the 1890s onwards which provided both general and detailed information on work. Oral testimony yielded useful, personal insights into the shopfloor world of the potbank in the absence of alternative written records. The recent discovery of the union's correspondence, dispute files and miscellaneous records had a major bearing on the research.<sup>27</sup> The collection of decaying paper and binders, after initial classification, included nearly 1000 letters, documents, ledgers, and notebooks. Many pieces were no more than scraps of papers, some written by single potters, others were produced by workgroups, yet they revealed many details of the small-scale social and industrial relations of the potbank. Whilst this collection has provided important material for our investigation care has been taken to relate and test it against alternative or complementary sources wherever possible.

The thesis is structured in the following way: it analyses work and trade unionism in relation to the range of contexts in which they occurred.

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27. The collection of evidence from the original National Amalgamated Society of Male and Female Pottery Workers was discovered in the basement of the Ceramic and Allied Trade Union's headquarters in Hanley in December 1979. The material was in no apparent order being scattered among tea chests, boxes and miscellaneous sacks and bags. After copying and noting a large part of the collection (referred to in the text as CATU Coll.) a simple classification was made of the letters and documents. When a document or letter is cited below it is prefixed with an L or D and an appropriate number.

These contexts included the industrial framework; the social relations of the workplace; the unions' origins, composition and organization and the relationships between employers and workers. Work and trade unionism will also be examined in a wider setting by identifying the potters participation in the community, their role in the labour movement and the industry's reply to action by the state or its officers.

The economic structure of the pottery industry provided the principal influence on the work of the potter. Chapter 1 will observe how the growth and development of pottery manufacture over two hundred years gave rise to durable traditions of production technique, company form and business strategy which conditioned the industry's response to the changes experienced in the early 20th century. The arrangement of the sub-industries, the variety of their products and their differing market positions will be identified and their varying effects on workers' attitudes and management or union policy displayed. The uneven evolution of ceramic technology helped to create a complex pattern of work routines and led to the creation of highly differentiated levels of skill and job content.

Chapter 2 focusses on the organization and experience of work. It will reconstruct the production process and the division of labour. The social groupings and customs which originated within the workplace will be observed as well as the building and operation of the potbank's payment system and its status and authority hierarchies. A detailed investigation of the process of pottery manufacture and how potters experienced work will facilitate an understanding of the social relations between not only workers and masters but also those within the workforce. The changes in technology, skill and working practices of the period critically affected

the industrial relations of the industry and formed the essential background to union organization and action. An industry with almost half the labour force made up of women provides an opportunity to study the historical role of the female worker and a chance to explore the relevance of the home and the family to work and trade unions. Given that the potters were beset with the problems of industrial disease, how the potters coped with ill-health and its associated difficulties had a clear impact on worker priorities and union objectives.

Chapter 3 will explain the intricate configuration of union form and assess the relationship between the workplace and union organization and action. The dominant characteristics of the craft unions of the 19th century will be related to the process of creating a single, amalgamated society which occupied almost the whole of the period from 1900 to the early 1920s. Workgroup or occupational strength, together with family or local loyalties formed the basis of the new union's structure and power. A distinction will be drawn between official and unofficial types of union action. This perspective enables one to find out how the society operated as an institution and to uncover the meaning of union membership for all sections of the workforce. By discovering the preoccupations of leaders and officials along with the aspirations of the membership the tensions between the need for collective union strength and the pressure for autonomous action becomes apparent.

Management played a vital part in shaping the nature of work and the practice of trade unionism in the Potteries as Chapter 4 will show. Managerial attempts to control production involved an extensive repertoire of techniques ranging from the use of piece-work to the more subtle forms of paternalism. However, workers, in isolation or combination, consistently

challenged management's efforts to control labour. The industrial relations of the industry which derived from this process of struggle also reflected the differences within capital and labour as well as the divisions between them. Contrary to popular belief conflict was widespread in the pottery industry throughout the period. The received view that collective bargaining became progressively centralised and more formal in British industry will be tested against the potters' experience.

Historians have become increasingly aware that workers and trade unionists should be located in the community of which they were a part, since industry and community co-existed. Chapter 5 will try to discern to what extent local, customary codes of behaviour informed and modified potters' attitudes and values towards their work or union. We also need to know how employers related to that environment, how active they were in the community and what connection did their position on the potbank have with their more public images. The social and class relations of the potbank and the community merit comparison. The growth of a local labour movement was rooted firmly in the Potteries' culture. Surveying the potters' actions inside and outside the potbank helps illuminate the part they played in the labour movement of the Six Towns. Given the past association of the potters with protective legislation and the continuing relevance of government policy to industrial life the chapter will also suggest how the state directly and indirectly influenced worker and union consciousness.

## CHAPTER 1

### The Pottery Industry

In 1900 the Staffordshire Potteries formed the greatest concentration of ceramic industry in the world. The region produced every article which had clay as its principal element. People spoke of the Potteries in international terms. Both masters and workers were 'admitted by everyone to be the most skilled potters in the world'. The performance of those potters at the trade fairs of Brussels, Turin, Ghent, Paris or Leipzig demonstrated that Staffordshire 'set the standard for the whole world'. Britain enjoyed a supremacy not only in the quality but also in the variety and scale of pottery production. At the turn of the century she accounted for almost a third of the world's ceramic export market and boasted the world's largest pottery factories. By any standard the Potteries constituted 'the world's greatest pottery industry'.<sup>1</sup>

In national terms the Potteries could justifiably be termed 'a great industrial district'. Eighty per cent of the country's pottery workers lived within a five mile radius of Stoke Town Hall where they produced nine tenths of Britain's pottery output in 1900. In 1911, 46,000 workers were employed directly, 80,000 indirectly, and almost the entire Potteries' population of a quarter of a million people was supported by the staple industry.<sup>2</sup> In the same year the pottery industry accounted

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1. S.H. Beaver, 'The Potteries: A Study in the Evolution of a Cultural Landscape', Institute of British Geographers. Transactions and Papers, No. 34, June (1966), p.1. J.R. Remer, Hansard 30 June 1927, Col. 631. The Times Imperial and Foreign Trade Supplement, August 1917, 'Special Pottery Edition', p.1. Department of Commerce, Misc. Series No. 21, The Pottery Industry. Report on the Cost of Production in the Earthenware and China Industries of the United States, England, Germany, and Austria (Washington, 1915), p.389. S.H. Dodd, 'The British Pottery Industry' in H.J. Schonfield (ed.), The Book of British Industries (1933) p.272. P. Gazette, February 1, 1906, p.179 and March 1, 1907, p.320.

2. H. Barrett-Greene, The TUC Hanley Meeting 1905, The History of the Staffordshire Potteries (Longton, 1905), pp. 22-29. H. Owen, The Staffordshire Potter (1901), p.4. R.H. Tawney, Intro. in W.H. Warburton, The History of Trade Union Organisation in the North Staffordshire Potteries (1931), p.11. Census of England and Wales. County of Stafford. County Borough of Stoke on Trent, Occupations 1911, Table 23, pp. 64-66.

for 0.3% of the national occupied workforce and 0.6% of the national industrial workforce (the mean percentage of the occupied workforce per industry was 4.17%). Though smaller than the coal, iron and steel or textile industries, relative to its size pottery made an important contribution to national production. The Times regarded pottery as 'a great industry, valued at £7 million a year' during the Great War. Gross output began at £3 million worth in 1900, grew to £7 million during the 1907-1912 period and in the early 1920s went over £10 million. Gross pottery output made up between 0.3 and 0.4% of gross national output and between 0.3 and 0.6% of national net output during the entire period.<sup>3</sup> The export role of pottery was a strong one. In 1907 approximately a quarter of the goods in the UK went for export: pottery exported between 35 and 40% of its production and continued to do so until the 1980s.<sup>4</sup>

To understand the forms of work and trade unionism connected with pottery manufacture we must first come to terms with the economic structure of that industry. In this chapter we shall try therefore to identify and explain the salient elements of that structure. Whilst located within a maturing capitalist economy the pottery industry exhibited a set of distinctive, almost unique features which provided a highly specific

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1. B.R. Mitchell and P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (Cambridge 1962), Tables: Labour Force 1, p.60 and Miscellaneous Production Statistics 14, p.270. A.W. Kirkaldy, et.al., British Labour, Replacement and Conciliation 1914-21 (1921), Table 1. G. Routh, Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-60 (Cambridge 1965), p.40. S. Pollard, The Development of the British Economy 1914-1950 (1962) p.124. Times I.F.T. Supplement in loc.cit. Final Report on the First Census of Production, 1907, Part 1, Cd. 6320 (1912) p.750.

4. W. Ashworth, An Economic History of England 1870-1939 (1960) p.160. A.E. Musson, The Growth of British Industry (1978), p.243. M.P. Fogarty, Nuffield Reconstruction Survey of Britain (Oxford 1945), p.327. Annual Statements of the Trade of the United Kingdom, 1900-1925 (1910-1926), Cd. 5159 ff. British Ceramic Manufacturers Federation, Britain's Ceramic Industry (1976), p.21.



context for the labour process of potting. Firstly, we shall explore the development of the industry during the preceding 200 years in order to appreciate how the main characteristics of pottery production were deeply embedded in the past. Secondly, the industry's sub-divisions will be highlighted thereby revealing the varieties of product and production. Thirdly, we will survey the market formation, its movements and the consequences this implied for changes in technology, work intensity and levels of employment. Fourthly, it will be necessary to investigate the shifts in the international ceramic industry which helped form local managerial strategy. Given the importance of the 'machinery question'<sup>5</sup> to British industrial and social life in general and the industrial relations of pottery manufacture in particular we shall, fifthly, examine the erratic evolution of ceramic technology. Our explanations for the segmentation of workforce and union would be groundless without an awareness of that process. An assessment will also be given of the broad experience of the industry during these 25 years. We will convey the range of economic rhythms, periods and performance the industry contained and the implications these contingencies produced for the organisations and actions of capital and labour. It will be argued that each of these five structural facets of the pottery industry had important bearings on the content and changes in pottery work and its attendant social relations.

### 1.1 Historical Development of the Industry

In spite of the pottery industry's being one of the most notable products of Britain's early industrialisation, no general history of the

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5. See for example: M. Berg (ed.), Technology and Toil in Nineteenth Century Britain (1979), passim. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, p. 196ff.

industry exists. Nevertheless, by examining that history many of the industry's main features in the early 20th century become more intelligible

Why was the industry concentrated in North Staffordshire? The original attractions were the good quality local clays and the region's coalfield which provided fuel particularly suited to the firing of ware. Both clay and coal, as well as lead for glazes were easily mined from the early 18th century. There was little local competition for the use of the coal. Pottery production remained on the coalfield, despite the discovery of high quality clays elsewhere, since the ratio of coal to clay use was 4:1 and it was therefore cheaper to import the new clays to Staffordshire. Infant pottery centres in the North-East and the East-Midlands faced competition for labour and capital in a way that North Staffordshire never experienced.<sup>6</sup> Once established, the concentration of the industry was reinforced by a cluster of factors. The region enjoyed a central national position in relation to its markets and its 'arrangement of freights'. The industry's late 18th century growth relied on displaced local agricultural workers for a pool of labour which ensured the development of a native workforce. In time the presence of an indigenous population, experienced in ceramic production became a vital reason for the industry remaining in the area: no other region could supply the telling combination of raw materials and a skilled workforce. As happened in other areas, the concentration of the industry was intensified by the establishment of a group of ancillary traders including crate-makers, coopers, flint-grinders, colour-makers, brush-

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6. P.W. Gay and R.L. Smyth, The British Pottery Industry (1974), p.14. J.L. and B.L. Hammond, The Rise of Modern Industry (1925), p.163. E. Surrey-Dane, 'The Economic History of the Staffordshire Pottery Industry to 1850', unpublished M.A. thesis, Sheffield 1950, p.18. H.A. Moisley, 'The Potteries Coalfield. A Regional Analysis', unpublished M.Sc. thesis, Leeds, 1950, pp. 95-97.

makers and paper-millers. By the early 19th century the forces making for concentration were so strong that firms began migrating to the Potteries from other areas.<sup>7</sup>

The industry which grew up in North Staffordshire in the 17th century was essentially a cottage industry. Red unglazed ware and salt-glazed pieces from 1690 onwards were the dominant products.<sup>8</sup> It was not until the mid-18th century that the first large-scale expansion of the industry occurred. Between 1660 and 1760, on the supply side, improvements in production technique had proceeded slowly involving ovens, kilns, wheels and lathes. Plaster moulds were in use by the 1740s which facilitated the general making of irregular shaped articles for the first time. In the 1750s new fluid lead glazes and double-firing were common, leading to the production of earthenware which superceded the risky and therefore expensive salt-glazed ware by the 1780s. White earthenware was a key departure in the growth of the industry since it became exceptionally popular for domestic and 'useful' purposes given its hard but smooth finish.<sup>9</sup> On the demand side, the period witnessed a social revolution in consumer taste as each strata of society emulated its social superiors: tea drinking for example, changed from a luxury to a necessity in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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7. S. Jevons, The Coal Question (1906), p.303. Moisley, in loc.cit. G.C. Allen, British Industries and their Organisation (1933), p.1. T.S. Ashton, An Economic History of England in the 18th Century (1955) pp. 91-97. For a review of industrial location theory which combines the role of entrepreneurs and the influence of economic factors see: G. Bloomfield, The World Automotive Industry (Newton Abbot 1978) p. 122ff.

8. J.L. and B.L. Hammond, op.cit. p.164. A. Ure, A Dictionary of Arts, Manufactures and Mines (1853 4th ed.) Vol. II, p.464.

9. E.S. Dane, op.cit. p.8ff. J.C. Wedgwood, Staffordshire Pottery and its History (n.d.) pp. 46, 67, 81, 84. S. Mayer, The Art of Pottery (1871) p.40. L. Weatherill, The Pottery Trade of North Staffordshire (1971). For the importance of pure china clays from Cornwall see U.S. Report (1915) p. 390.

Table No. 1Pottery Industry Size 1710-1901

<u>Date</u>	<u>Workers</u>	<u>Pot Banks</u>	<u>Output p.a.</u>
1710-1715	500	40-47	£6,417
1762	7,000	150	-
1769	10,000	124	-
1785	15,000	-	-
1801	-	146	-
1835	20,000	157	-
1841	24,724	-	-
1851	25,000	160	£2,000,000
1861	27,000	170	£2,210,000
1871	31,279	214	-
1881	36,230	297	-
1891	44,550	-	-
1901	46,451	400	£3,000,000

Sources: E. Surrey-Dane, 'The Economic History of the Staffordshire Pottery Industry to 1850', unpublished M.A. thesis, Sheffield, 1950, pp. 8, 12, 19 and 20. J. Thomas, The Rise of the Staffordshire Potteries (Bath, 1971), pp. 6, 9 - 12. W.H. Warburton, The History of Trade Union Organisation in the North Staffordshire Potteries (1931), p.66. P. Mathias, The First Industrial Nation (1969), p.261. J. Boyle, 'An Account of the Strikes in the Potteries in the Years 1834 and 1836', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society of London, Vol. I (1839), p.37. M.W. Greenslade and J.G. Jenkins (eds.), The Victoria History of the County of Stafford, Vol. II (Oxford 1967), pp. 45-6 and 51. H. Barrett Greene, The TUC Hanley Meeting 1905, The History of the Staffordshire Potteries (Langton 1905), p.64. J.C. Wedgwood, Staffordshire Pottery and its History (n.d.) pp. 48 and 53. Note: these figures are estimates given the differing definition of the industry used by observers.

In response to the widespread demand for inexpensive decorated ware advances followed in transfer printing between 1756-1760 and the perfection of painting, gilding and colours. Ornamental wares (often in new forms such as Basalt or Jasper) were added to the range of pottery products on a large scale; stimulated by, inter alia, the neo-classical revival. By these decades therefore, pottery manufacturers, with products suited to growing consumer expenditure and demand, broke through to a national and later international market. Innovations in production techniques and ware types were paralleled by new forms of factory organisation, increased division of labour and enhanced market and communications networks. By 1800 British earthenware, as Bourry put it, 'ruled supreme, and all the countries of Europe paid tribute to the faience (earthenware) manufacturers of Staffordshire'.<sup>10</sup>

It was in the 19th century that the pottery industry diversified into its modern form of a group of related sub-industries. Between 1800 - 1850 there were no major innovations in production technique. Instead there was a gradual diffusion of the best-practice which the trade leaders had established. Earthenware was still the foundation of the industry. Stoneware products based on the cheaper clays continued to be made. In the early 19th century Staffordshire took the lead in china production from the previous century's centres at London, Worcester and Derby. China or porcelain manufacture expanded with Longton specialising in the cheap mass market while an elite group, led by Mintons ('the

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10. N. McKendrick, 'Home Demand and Economic Growth: A New View of the Role of Women and Children in the Industrial Revolution', Ch. IV in N. McKendrick (ed.), Historical Perspectives. Studies in English Thought and Society (1974). N. McKendrick, 'Josiah Wedgwood and Factory Discipline', Historical Journal, iv, 1961. E. Bourry, A Treatise on Ceramic Industries (1919), trans. A.B. Searle, p.14. See also A.E. Musson, British Industry, p.127 for the pioneering work of Turner et.al. besides Wedgwood.

first of European factories'), dominated the higher priced sectors of Europe.<sup>11</sup> A variant of porcelain known as Parian was added to the range after mid-century to satisfy the increased demand for statuary porcelain in the 1870s and 1880s. The growth in output and sales of this initial product range arose primarily from serving the mass market. Design was always a weakness but Staffordshire possessed commanding advantages over incipient foreign manufacturers regarding her quality clays, cheap coal, good transport facilities, the benefits from concentration in a single region and above all the extreme dexterity of the English artisans.<sup>12</sup>

As the 19th century progressed one section of the industry expanded markedly and two entirely new branches were created. The demand for bricks and tiles increased with the growth of industry and towns. The two sections of the industry which were children of the late 19th century were the sanitary and electrical trades. Sanitary ware was in its infancy in the 1860s, new ware types were added in the 1880s and the 1890s saw high levels of production in response to the increasing needs of housing, hotels and public institutions. Twyford's earthenware pieces were replacing the enamelled metal products of Wolverhampton given their greater adhesive qualities and polished finish. Foreign potters were forced to imitate. Specialist electrical ware was made to serve the needs of the late 19th century electrical industry's growth. Porcelain had high quality insulation properties and could assume an extensive

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11. E.S. Dane, op.cit., p.19. For an explanation of the sub-industries within pottery, see Section 1.2 below. See M. Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism (1946, revised ed. 1963) p.258 for the unevenness of development both between and within industries. E. Bourry, op.cit., p.19. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1910-11, 11th ed.) Vol. XXV, p.758. A. Briggs, Iron Bridge to Crystal Palace (1979) p.165.

12. J.L. and B.L. Hammond, op.cit., pp. 165 and 171. J.C. Wedgwood, op.cit., p.188. Encyclopaedia Britannica, p. 756ff. H. Coghill, 'The Ceramic Manufactures of Staffordshire', in S. Timmins (ed.), The Resources, Products and Industrial History of Birmingham and the Midland Hardware District (1866) pp. 145-6.

variety of very small shapes. By 1900 almost half the world's supply of electrical insulators came from Bullers. At the start of the 20th century the pottery industry was composed of seven sub-branches, the form it has retained down to the present day.<sup>13</sup>

The growth in the pottery industry's size mirrored the expansion of pot-making from the butter pot sellers of the 17th century, to the earthenware and china producers of the 18th and through to its seven sector composition by 1900. The clear growth spurts were in the second halves of the 18th and 19th centuries and based upon the demand for new sets of products in each case. Between 1760 and 1800 the workforce increased by 185%; from 1840 to 1900 the increase was a more modest 84%.<sup>14</sup>

During the growth profile we have described three important features of the industry appeared: the uneven levels of mechanisation of the production process; the stratification of the industry by company type and the generation of a high density of work customs. Each characteristic which developed during this growth period will provide a key variable in our analysis of work at the start of the 20th century.

Berg has suggested that technological development in the 19th century was not uniform and that in many industries mechanisation of basic production phases remained incomplete. Others show how the use of machinery in one part of the production process could often be

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13. Moisley, op.cit., p.69. Bourry, op.cit., pp. 18-19. G.W. and F.A. Rhead, Staffordshire Pots and Potters (1906), p.27. J.C. Wedgwood, op.cit., pp. 204-5. R. Haggard, 'The Pottery Industry' in M.W. Greenslade and J.G. Jenkins (eds.), The Victoria History of the County of Stafford (Oxford 1967), Vol. II, p.34. See D. Landes, The Unbound Prometheus (Cambridge 1969), p.235 for the growth of the electrical and motor industries. The seven sub-industries were earthenware, china, jet and rockingham, sanitary, electrical, chemical and tiles.

14. See Table 1. See also the remarks on the growth of the industry by the Child Employment Commission as quoted by K. Marx, Capital (1889), Vol. 1, from the 3rd German Edition, ed. F. Engels, Trans. S. Moore and E. Aveling (1938), p.230.

accompanied by increased manual labour elsewhere. Mechanisation could also require, not necessarily displace, manual (often skilled) operation.<sup>15</sup> The pottery industry is a good example. In the late 18th century pottery was one of the leading industries in the application of steam power (mainly in flint and glaze milling). Yet by the early 19th century the dominant position of the kiln in the production process reduced the importance of mechanisation in other phases. The expansion of the industry also relied heavily on innovations in body or glaze composition and improvements in factory organisation. Certain mechanical devices had been improved such as the potter's wheel and lathe but never to the same extent as in textiles for example. These devices also were based on manual operation and with a large pool of local labour pottery remained a labour intensive industry.<sup>16</sup> It was as late as 1864 and the effects of the Factory Extension Act which produced the decisive turning point in the mechanisation of the industry before 1900. The restriction of work hours and the advent of half-time child labour produced a new need to concentrate production. In the 1860s steam-power transmission was applied to grinders, blungers, pugging and later to parts of 'making'. Between 1870 and 1900 bouts of reduced demand coupled with nascent foreign competition increased the need to mechanise as profit margins fell. The levels of domestic and foreign competition meant that potters could not increase prices and therefore machines were used to

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15. M. Berg, op.cit., p.5. R. Samuel, 'The Workshop of the World: Steam Power and Hand Technology in mid-Victorian Britain', History Workshop, No. 3, Spring 1977, pp. 6-73. See also S. Pollard, op.cit., p.95 on the nature of technological change in the 19th century.

16. E.S. Dane, op.cit., p.21. J. Thomas, op.cit., p.11. M. Nixon, 'The Emergence of the Factory System in the Staffordshire Pottery Industry', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Aston, 1976, p.90. H. Owen, op.cit., p.63. See A. Lamb, 'The Press and Labour's Response to Pottery-Making Machinery in the North Staffordshire Pottery Industry', Journal of Ceramic History, No. 9 (1977), pp. 1-8, and Coghill in loc.cit. for the unsuccessful attempts to introduce making machines in the 1840s.



try and economise on wage costs. It was in this relatively late period that the term 'revolution' was used in the industry to describe the introduction and spread of machinery which began to intensify and replace manual skill in certain areas of production.<sup>17</sup> The result of this uneven and partial mechanisation of pottery manufacture was that craft skills were of central importance to production down to 1900 and beyond.

The division of labour in the industry reflected the irregularity and lateness of mechanisation. The division of labour which resulted from the transition from a cottage to factory-based industry did not involve the detailed breakdown of tasks which machinery could require. Instead, there was a change from the two or three main operations of the 17th and early 18th centuries to the separation out of a range of skilled trades by the 19th. The growth in demand for a vastly increased range of products increased the spread of specialist craft occupations by 1850 to between 20 and 30. Yet given the relative lack of mechanisation the general division of labour was little altered between 1850 and 1900. The skilled firemen, pressers, printers or modellers may have had elements of their job refined or simplified by certain mechanical developments but they were not de-skilled out of existence. Compare Ure's account of pottery manufacture in 1853 with Bevan's (1871) or Binns's (1898) and it is noticeable that the general division of labour has remained substantially unchanged and that the specific tasks of the skilled trades had not been radically transformed.<sup>18</sup> Pottery manufacture remained a

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17. F. Celoria, 'Ceramic Machinery of the 19th Century', Staffordshire Archaeology, No. 2 (1973), pp. 11-47. Warburton, op.cit., pp. 191-7.

18. S. Shaw, History of the Staffordshire Potteries (Hanley 1829), p. 104. Warburton, op.cit., p.25. A Ure, Dictionary of Manufactures, pp. 466-475. G. Bevan, Industrial Classes and Industrial Statistics (E. Stanford 1876), pp. 143-148. C.F. Binns, Ceramic Technology (1898), passim.

hand-craft activity much longer than other industries. As a craft it did not slot easily into the 'age of manufacture' where the object of new machinery led to 'the equalisation of labour', dispensing thereby with the aptitudes of the 'self-willed and intractable' skilled workman.<sup>19</sup> In pottery the opposite was true.

The second important feature to appear during the industry's growth was its stratification by company type. A model exists<sup>20</sup> which explains capitalist development in terms of a core-periphery argument. The core of an industry consists of the largest, most efficient and technologically advanced companies who employ the more skilled and higher paid workers. At the periphery there exists the smaller, least efficient, often transient units with relatively unskilled, low paid labour. The pottery industry's growth does not fit this model. As demand increased from the late 18th century the traditional single master employing around ten workers could not cope. Production units grew in order to increase output.<sup>21</sup> However, as Samuel points out the modes of production found in even the 19th century could take on a range of forms and these were not uniformly equated with the factory system. So although the average size pottery firm had increased from 75 employees in 1785 to 155 in 1836 and 167 in 1862, the 1857 census shows that over 60% of pottery masters in earthenware still employed less than 20 men. What emerged by the mid-19th century was a three tier structure. At the base were the smallest units, employing up to 100 hands, with little capital, producing mainly

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19. M. Dobb, Development of Capitalism, p.259.

20. A.L. Friedman, Industry and Labour. Class Struggle at Work and Monopoly Capitalism (1977) pp. 114-118. G. Bloomfield, op.cit., p.20.

21. J.L. and B.L. Hammond, Modern Industry, p.168. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, p.24.

cheap wares which were either imitations of larger manufacturers' designs or produced on sub-contract for them. At the top were the leading firms, highly capitalised, with world markets for their high quality product ranges. In 1842 a group of 25 such factories existed, each employing between 500 and 1,000 workers.<sup>22</sup>

There was also a third, intermediate layer made up of firms employing between 100 and 500 people. The largest companies in the industry had multi-site plants and produced more than one of the seven ware types: a single ware type made on one site characterised the medium sized potbanks. Unlike the smallest 'banks the firms in the middle layer could be specialists, as in the china trade, with high quality output for specific markets. The simple distinction between core and periphery does not work in the case of pottery. One element which was common to all levels of the industry's structure was the family basis of the firm. In an intensely localised industry native families of potters supplied the capital and basic managerial skills necessary to run a majority of the firm types. In the smaller and intermediate firms especially, the social distance between master and worker could be very small.<sup>23</sup> The implications of the three tier structure and pervasiveness

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22. R. Samuel, 'Workshop of the World', p.8. F. Burchill and R. Ross, A History of the Potters' Union (Hanley, 1977), pp. 24-25. The Child Employment Commission: Appendix to Second Report (1842), 'The Scriven Report' p.66; 1862 Report, Appendix, Reports of Evidence of Assistant Commissioners (1863), 'The Longe Report', p.18. Returns of Factories and Workshops, LXII (1871), p. 105.

23. For the importance of the intermediate layer of firms see R. Whipp, 'The Women Pottery Workers of Staffordshire and Trade Unionism, 1890-1905', unpublished M.A. thesis, Warwick, 1979, pp. 7-8. J.C. Wedgwood, Staffordshire Pottery, p.193. Gay and Smyth, Pottery Industry, p.36. S. Shaw, History of the Potteries, passim. Note N. Rosenberg, 'Economic Development and the transfer of technology, some historical perspectives', Technology and Culture, 11, 1970, for the importance however, of a small group of technologically advanced firms (such as Wedgwood, Doulton, Johnson) for the development and diffusion of innovation within an industry.

of the family firm for the industry's labour market or the social relations of the potbank in the early 20th century will be revealed when we look at these subjects in detail below.

The development of pottery manufacture included a third component: the work customs peculiar to pot-making. In the absence of guild regulations the pottery industry became saturated with trade customs and work practices. The dominant forms were as follows: the 'count' contract of the 18th century craftsman evolved into the intricate piece-work system for all operatives. Embedded in the count and piece-work contracts were strong determinants of the social relations between potters. By the contract hiring system the importance of the craft potter was established. His power was enhanced by the way he sub-employed his assistants. The craftsman alone decided the wages and work conditions of his sub-employees.<sup>24</sup> Sub-employment thrived as masters used it as a form of delegating supervision throughout the 19th century. The attempts to regain direct managerial control of production in the 1900s were therefore highly contentious. Sub-employment also helped shape the form of gender relations at work. Male skilled potters often used women as assistants, usually members of their family. Relatively few women were skilled therefore, or earned wages (if any) higher than men, and their work involved virtually little exercise of authority or significant control of the work process. The use of family relations to form work groups meant that a close, traditional link was perpetuated between home and work. At the same time, images of male authority in

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24. W. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, p.26. The Potters' Examiner, 19 December 1874.

the home were reproduced and reinforced by male dominance in the workshop. As a result, direct female employment by masters was opposed and retarded, and the impact of women on the potters' unions minimised.<sup>25</sup>

Between 1700-1900 the pottery industry exhibited both continuities and discontinuities. The industry's evolution produced a workforce and form of manufacture with singular traits. To understand how these qualities were generated is to be better equipped to realise how they operated in 1900-1924. We would argue that the social relations of the latter era were the product of a set of forces specific to that period: there was no inevitable progression of events which produced those forces. However, the actions of workers at a given point in history are informed by their awareness of the traditions and customs of their industry and its region.<sup>26</sup> The pottery industry's growth provided a serious context for the customs which potters, masters and workers, evoked. Potters reconstructed the past when choosing particular actions or when remaking their consciousness in the 1900s in the face of immediate, violent changes in their lives. Having traced back the role of craft authority, the range of skills in the division of labour and the linkages of work and family we may now be able to assess how and why potters used the past in the way they did in the early 20th century. The pottery industry therefore experienced strong continuities of structure and practice.<sup>27</sup>

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25. The Morning Leader, 11 December 1902. C. Shaw, When I was a Child (1903), pp. 46, 48 and 67. Potters' Examiner, 9 January 1875, letter headed 'female attendants'; and 15 November 1879, 'Women's Labour' and 3 January 1880.

26. K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, p.150 for the strength of custom in determining wage levels. Also, E. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, 'Custom, Wages and Work-load', pp. 344-370.

27. For the use of a long-term historical perspective in explaining industrial features see R. Dore, British Factory Japanese Factory: the Origins of National Diversity in Industrial Relations (1973).

In pottery the discontinuities that occurred were occasioned by growth in the late 18th and 19th centuries. In these phases additional products, techniques and even sub-industries were added. They did not supersede or destroy existing forms but were complementary to them. The result was an industry which enjoyed a relatively continuous growth. Its geographical concentrated location, the seven sub-industries and company strata were features which were not critically altered by trade or macro-economic fluctuations. That the potters and their industry were so embedded in the past helps explain therefore why the changes witnessed in the 1900-1924 period were regarded as profound and in many cases traumatic.

#### 1.2 Industrial Structure 1900-1924

During these twenty-five years the pottery industry remained a composite group of sub-industries. The difference in product alone was sufficient to establish a variation of worker status, union strength, industrial relations style and even to effect the forms of community life. Certainly potters conceived of their industry as composed of a number of sections. This exchange during an inquiry in 1924 is indicative:

Wethered (Chairman): 'You say china and earthenware. Is that the same as the sanitary?'

Clowes (Trade unionist): 'No, the china is one branch of the industry and the earthenware is another. The sanitary is again entirely separate'.<sup>28</sup>

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28. B.A. Whitelegge, Chief Inspector of factories, Report of the Departmental Committee on the Use of Lead in Earthenware and China (1910), Vol. 1, p.6. CATU COLL. NCPI Verbatim Report of 1924 Wage Negotiations, 'Proceedings of a Special Committee of Inquiry', p. 'N'.

Table 2.Distribution of Pottery Manufacture in the Six Towns 1907.

	<u>Stoke</u>	<u>Hanley</u>	<u>Longton</u>	<u>Fenton</u>	<u>Burslem</u>	<u>Tunstall</u>
Earthenware	16	47	31	18	46	11
China	11	11	50	12	11	3
Jet & Rockingham	1	4	2	3	12	3
Sanitary Ware	2	8	1		8	
Tiles	14	14		1	13	10
Others	2	15	1	3	6	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>28 : 391</b>

Source: Reconstructed from the entries in The Potteries, Newcastle and District Directory (Hanley, 1907).

In total there were seven sub-industries distinguished by products: earthenware, china, jet and rockingham, sanitaryware, electrical ware, chemical ware and tiles. Only the larger firms consistently produced more than one type. Bishop and Stonier (for example), had three works. The Stafford produced domestic and hotel earthenware; the Church turned out granite and semi-porcelain whilst the Waterloo works made high class china. Most pottery firms were firmly located in one sub-industry only.<sup>29</sup>

As Table 2 shows the distribution of the sub-industries amongst the Six Towns was not uniform.<sup>30</sup> Earthenware was the most widely spread.

29. P. Gazette, 1 July 1906, p.819. CATU COLL. L601. Booths Ltd. to J. Lovatt 22.9.1911. For 'granite' and 'semi-porcelain' see Glossary. Times I.F.T. Supplement, August 1917 Pottery edition advertisements throughout for trade leaders' range of output.

30. See also Kelly's Directory of Staffordshire for 1900 (HBL), and Report of the Tariff Commission, Pt. II in P. Gazette, 1 May 1907, p.593.

At the other extreme, the concentration of china makers in Longton was very high, with more china works in the one town than in all the other five towns combined. The jet and rockingham trade was centred on Burslem whilst sanitary ware was made in the heart of the Potteries with 85% of the producers in Hanley and Burslem. The relative concentration of the sub-industries was important. In earthenware it was difficult for workers to consider themselves as part of a single sub-industry. Earthenware making was too diffused among the towns and highly variegated with 169 firms. By contrast in Longton to be a potter was to be a china potter. Similarly the twelve 'Jet and Rock' or eight sanitary ware units in Burslem both formed recognisable groups united by production methods and location. What were the results for collective action? It was impossible to organise the earthenware trade by reference to a unitary self-image when it did not exist. The differing levels of concentration and irregular distribution of trades also explains why the early craft unions mobilised craft groups related to single towns. Further, it also shows why the union cohesion of earthenware trade and indeed the whole industry proved so difficult. By contrast the solidarity of sanitary potters is more understandable given their distinctive product, status and their geographical concentration. The high density of firms in Hanley and Burslem (nearly half the industry were found there) also gives us a clue to the strong propensity for trades unionism and political activity which this area showed. Hanley and Burslem witnessed the widest range of economic and technical changes and provided the means of comparing wages and conditions for the workers in those sub-industries. By contrast, Longton had a tradition and consciousness confined to china production. Longton was relatively isolated, given the communications of the Potteries and the low mobility of china workers. China workers were



Table 3Output by Product Type in the Pottery Industry 1907-1924

	<u>1907</u>		<u>1912</u>		<u>1924</u>	
	<u>Value</u> <u>£1,000</u>	%	<u>Value</u> <u>£1,000</u>	%	<u>Value</u> <u>£1,000</u>	%
Earthenware (incl. Jet & Rockingham)	4,277	55.11	4,492	53.59	9,031	54.75
China	1,025	13.21	1,221	14.57	2,021	12.25
Sanitary	1,305	16.81	1,464	17.47	2,495	15.13
Electrical & Chemical	561	7.23	585	6.98	1,209	7.33
Tiles	593	7.64	620	7.40	1,738	10.54
<b>Total:</b>	<b>7,761</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>8,382</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>16,494</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: Final Report on the First Census of Production 1907, Part I, Cd. 6320 (1912), pp. 750-751. Final Report on the Third Census of Production, 1924, Manufactures of Clay, Stone, etc. (1932) pp. 209-213. (The figures for output by weight are incomplete).

as susceptible, therefore, to the influence of other industrial groups (principally the miners) as they were to potters in other sub-industries, and this was reflected in the towns' political growth.<sup>31</sup>

In order to discover the influences of the variety of sub-industries within pottery manufacture on the forms of work experience and collective action we need to look now at output levels and product types.

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31. F. Parkin, Autobiography of a Trade Unionist (n.d.) p.XVI. P. Gazette, 1 April 1907, p. 478 and 1 May 1907, p.593, 597-8. For the political divisions of the Six Towns see Chapter 5.

From Table 3 it is clear that earthenware was by far the largest sector and the foundation of the industry. Contemporaries often spoke as if earthenware and the pottery industry were synonymous. Given that earthenware provided a base-line against which other sectors were compared it became as important as it was difficult for a mass union to organise it. China and sanitary ware accounted for between 12 and 17% of output respectively and were key sectors in output terms. Between them earthenware, china and sanitary ware were responsible for nearly 85% of pottery sold. By contrast the remaining sectors were in output terms quite small in this period and did not dominate the potters' or union's consciousness in the way the earthenware, china and sanitary sectors did. China's and sanitary's status was also enhanced by the nature of their output. China was low bulk but very high value as befitted the skilled china workers' image. Sanitary produced very large items, as the quantity by weight figures show, so that sanitary potters also enjoyed high prestige for the physical and mental skills their work involved.<sup>32</sup>

The differences in product type were large both between and within the sub-industries. This range of products ensured a rich mixture of technological and work forms, as well as stark differences in the degree of technical change. Varying the ingredients, recipes and the making, glazing, decorating and firing processes made the product range possible. Earthenware<sup>33</sup> itself included general earthenware, majolica,<sup>34</sup>

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32. See Census of Production 1924, pp. 210-213, for value per cwt. figs. Earthenware, £4.95; China, £28.07; Sanitary, £1.12; Elec. & Chem., £3.74 and Tiles, £1.68.

33. Traditional recipe for e.ware body: Ball clay, 25 parts by weight; China Clay, 25 p.b.w.; Flint, 35 p.b.w.; Stone, 15 p.b.w.; in Gay and Smyth, Pottery Industry, p.20. Ball Clay provides strength and gives plasticity to body. China Clay adds whiteness to body as does flint which also helps the body to cloy. E.ware has a robust body suitable generally for everyday use and is opaque.

34. Majolica (often included in e.ware statistics) made of same body as e.ware but before glaze is applied it is mixed with colouring oxides and pigments.

stoneware<sup>35</sup> and some would argue jet and rockingham.<sup>36</sup> Some earthenware for the table almost rivalled porcelain while stoneware or jet and rockingham were made from more simple clays and had a very basic use. Such variety of product made uniform piece-rates or the standardisation that industry-wide collective bargaining required very difficult. Unlike other staple industries, a single body type was produced in different ways.<sup>37</sup> The work intensity in making china plates in one firm could be quite different from the firm across the street making the same 9" plate simply because the bodies working plasticity varied with the nuance of recipe. The problems inherent in the product type were therefore immense for union representations and negotiators.<sup>38</sup>

The social distance between workers or among manufacturers in the industry was often great given the different products. China boasted of its production of 'the most beautifully manufactured porcelain in the world'. Earthenware's body was more suited to machine production given its simple recipe. China however had a more intricate recipe mix process and was less amenable to mechanical handling. As one ceramic expert put

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35. Stoneware: (often included in e.ware statistics), had small quantity of china clay but high percentage of ball clay. Less porous and much tougher than most e.ware; often brown in colour. S. Advertiser, 26 May, 1906, p.6. Bourry, op.cit., p.426. C. Booth, Life and Labour of the People in London (2nd Series, 1902-04 eds.), pp. 97-98. Binns, op.cit., p.xii.

36. Jet and Rockingham: made from simple brown clays, virtually unmixed with other ingredients. If glaze contained Cobalt, Jet was the outcome; if Manganese was added Rockingham resulted. H.M.I. Factories Report, 1908, p.143.

37. For definitions of ware types see 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup>, Vol. 1, pp. 5-6.

38. Machin, Pottery Production, p.63, noted a Prices and Incomes Board survey which showed there are still extreme contrasts of process and product in earthenware alone.

it 'the limits of composition are exceedingly wide'. The manufacture of china in 1917 was described as 'the province of the skilled craftsman and of the artist, and it is as true to-day as it ever was'.<sup>39</sup> In comparison earthenware had a very different reputation. It was said that: 'the production of earthenware is a business; the making of porcelain an art and craft'.<sup>40</sup> Sanitary,<sup>41</sup> like china had a self-image of being a world-leader in its product and yet possessing the unique skills needed to make the often large and heavy fireclay based bodies. Individual crafts in sanitary ware stood out from their counterparts elsewhere. Firemen in stoneware fired their product one time only while in sanitary some pieces necessitated prolonged firing and specialised ovens and techniques. Sanitary workers were as proud of making a well-glazed, evenly balanced closet (toilet) as were china craftsmen of their bone-china services. Also, because of the differences in body type the industrial relations in china as opposed to sanitary ware were quite different. Casting hardly effected china; in sanitary the new process threatened the very existence of the highest paid craftsman.

The smaller electrical, chemical and tile sectors were far removed in character from the other sub-industries.<sup>42</sup> In electrical and chemical use the industries they supplied required body qualities hitherto unheard

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39. China: glazed before printing (e.ware had underglaze), fine yet strong, translucent body. Body recipe: 4 parts bone ash, 3½ parts china clay, 4 parts china stone. Fired at 1250°C (e.ware: 1150°C). Bourry, op.cit., pp. 436-7, 449. Binns, Manual of Practical Potting (1922) p.xii.

40. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 1917, Section XII.

41. Sanitary: some types use same body recipe as e.ware; when greater tensile strength was needed a fireclay composition was used. 'Cane and White' sanitary ware was stoneware with a white slip surface. Times I.F.T. Supplement, ibid, 'Sanitary Ware'. P. Gazette, 1 March 1913, p.309. G.M. Forsyth, How the Potter Works (n.d.) p.139.

42. Electrical and Chemical: Bourry, op.cit., p.447. P. Gazette, 1 January 1906, p.71. Accountant's Report to 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.32. S.H. Dodd, 'The Pottery Industry' in H.J. Schonfield, (ed.), The Book of British Industries (1933), p.274. Body composed of compound silicotes of alumina, potash, lime and soda.

of. For example, high voltages required especial insulating properties and higher standards of pyrometry and firing operations. The technical control of production was here more firmly in the hands of management and ceramic specialists than in other sectors where craftsmen often determined design, translation and execution themselves. Also, the degree of change in chemical and electrical ware was far greater than in the other sub-industries. Between 1880 and 1918 a complete shift in product type occurred. Makers of china furniture nearly all went over to producing electrical switch gear through to insulators. During the First World War the first British hard-paste electrical porcelains and refractory ware were produced in response to demand from government, the explosives industry and the makers of engines. Worker control of production was therefore low given the unusually high involvement of ceramic specialists. The constant changes in output and techniques meant that collective action and traditions were inhibited. Production of tiles was differentiated by its use of clay powder, not liquid, for its bodies.<sup>43</sup> In all three sectors the use of machinery or the closer sub-divisions of labour led to comparatively simple tasks which were classed as unskilled. As a result, these sub-industries were distinguished by their labour markets as they employed large numbers of women. Low pay, the negative image of female labour held by craftsmen and the separate qualities of the electrical, chemical or tile sections meant that union levels were low. It will be argued that this differentiation in the tile section, for example, largely explains why an outside union, the Navvies and General Labourers became so important in that area during this period.

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43. Tiles: R. Prosser, 'Edward Dobson's "A rudimentary Treatise on the Manufacture of Bricks and Tiles"', Journal of Ceramic History, No. 5, 1971.

It is therefore inappropriate to speak of the pottery industry as if it made a single product range by a uniform production process. The notions of 'the pottery industry' or 'the potter', if used without qualification, are entirely artificial constructs. Even the seven sub-industries we have delineated contained sub-sections. Frederick Parkin thought that even his small sub-industry, Jet and Rockingham 'presented something like a jig-saw puzzle'.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, within the sub-industries the distribution of power and influence among the firms produced 'trade-leaders' who further distinguished each sector. The trade leaders were often responsible for the main developments of their sector and in some cases the sub-industries had grown directly as a result of leading firms. Grindleys, Meakins, Maddocks and Johnsons dominated earthenware in all respects, as did Mintons, Doultons, Wedgwood, Cauldon and Copleland in china. The small electrical ware sector became almost synonymous with the two men who created it: Thomas Taylor and William Tunnicliff.<sup>45</sup> The pottery industry in 1900 was therefore an amalgam of sub-industries. Each sub-section revealed its own forms of product range, industrial process, labour market and consequently their own variants of unionism and capital/labour relations. This is not to argue that there were no common features or points of contact between sub-industries. What we will be exploring when we look at trade union organisation and action in the industry, is a tension. The tension was between those striving for an industry-wide union, or industrial collective bargaining and the forces making for local diversity which were prompted by the structure of industry.

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44. F. Parkin, op.cit., p.xvi.

45. CATU COLL: Doulton & Co. to Clowes, 19 August, 1916. P. Gazette, 1 January 1906, p.71 and 1 February, 1911 p.195. U.S. Report 1915, p.389.

### 1.3 Product Markets and Industrial Performance

The segmentation of the pottery industry was compounded by its product markets. In the broadest sense there was a two-fold division between those sectors which produced for domestic, personal demand (useful and decorated ware) and those which made for industry (tiles, electrical, chemical and sanitary). The potters in the first and largest group saw their markets in very defensive terms. They regarded their product as less essential a commodity than say coal: the local axiom that pottery was first in and last out of a depression, mirrored their sense of muted national industrial power.<sup>46</sup> However, we also need to examine the home and export markets. The contention is that the market performance of the industry strongly influenced not only the levels of employment in the Six Towns but also helps explain the work experience of the potter and the degree and timing of industrial conflict.<sup>47</sup> We need to know therefore, how important were the home and foreign markets for the whole industry and each sub-industry?; how did these market relations change? and what effect did these shifts have on work in pottery?

The potters catered for an extensive home market. Between 60 and 65% of production was consumed in this country. British buyers purchased £1½ million worth of china each year alone in the 1900s. Home demand had a reputation for reliability, as a Pottery Gazette article observed in 1914:<sup>48</sup>

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46. Interview with M. Beresford. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1908, p.348. T. Coxon, J.J. Astor et.al., The Third Winter of Unemployment (1922), pp. 301-302.

47. cf. J.E. Cronin, Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain (1979) pp. 58, 101.

48. Calculated from Annual Statement of Trade 1907, 1912, 1924 and Census of Production 1924, in loc. cit. Cf. L. Gazette, pottery industry entries 1900-1924. The Times Engineering Supplement, 21 April 1913, p.8. P. Gazette, 1 April 1914, p.409, Editorial. For general trends in home market see Ashworth, Economic History, p.245ff and D. Aldcroft, Development of British Industry, pp. 25-26.

We are of the opinion that the home market provides the backbone of the business of the average [pottery] manufacturer ... The demand from the British public is steady and substantial, not being subject to violent fluctuations either as regards quantity or style.

For the manufacturer home demand was comparatively 'steady' when put next to the foreign but for the operative the periodic fluctuations of the domestic market were of immediate significance. For example, the generally low employment of the early 1900s was broken by the sharp demand for coronation goods in 1902. Domestic demand was depressed in the 1900s and again in 1914. In 1906 a potter looked back on the years 1900-1905 and counted 'nearly forty factories void'. The first reason he gave was the state of the home market. The significance of the large home market was shown with force in late 1907. Despite expanding pottery exports, home demand remained low with the result that the newly-formed mass potters' union found it very difficult to attract the wide membership it required in these early years.<sup>49</sup> For the sanitary trade the home market in housing was crucial. The poor performance of sanitary in the period 1911-1920 and the apparent quiescence of its workers compared to other potters is well correlated with the building cycle.<sup>50</sup> Conversely the exceptional general home demand for pottery during and after the war made the main growth phase of the potters' union possible. Also, as pottery workers tried to move to companies producing for the home market at this time, conflict arose as masters attempted to prevent the labour flow. As these examples show, it was the fickleness, not the steadiness, of the home demand for pottery which made pottery workers so conscious of their industrial vulnerability.

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49. L. Gazette, July 1902, 'The Pottery Industry'. P. Gazette, 1 February 1906, W.T. letter; 25 January, p.181 and 1 May 1908, p.585. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 2 July 1917, p.76 and 1 April 1918, p.9. CATU COLL: National Executive C<sup>ee</sup>. Mins. November 1924.

50. Cf. Sanitary's performance in the L. Gazette, pottery industry monthly reports with Mitchell and Deane, Statistical Abstract, Houses Built - Gt. Britain 1856-1956, p.239.



The world market for British pottery was a wide one covering over thirty nations. How this market's composition changed and the variance in export performance within the industry are key contextual features of work and trade unionism in the pottery industry. There were forces within the export market making for stability and turbulence.<sup>51</sup>

In a general sense the pottery export market composition would appear to have changed relatively little during the period. The USA, Australia, Canada and Argentina took around 50% of Britain's exported pottery throughout.<sup>52</sup> The United States' market had been a pillar of the industry. In 1900 potters said that 'it has always been the solid American trade which has made the fortunes of the Staffordshire potters'.<sup>53</sup> Eightytwo per cent of ware sent to the US was earthenware and the workers at Wedgwoods, Doultons, Copelands, Mintons, Meakins, Maddocks and Johnsons in particular relied heavily on American demand.<sup>54</sup> However, if we look closely we discover that the US market was changing. Not only was America developing its own pottery industry but it was also beginning to compete with Staffordshire in Canada. In 1900 the US took 28.95%

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51. R.L. Smyth, V. Irvine and P.W. Gay, 'An Economic Survey of the British Domestic Pottery Industry', North Staffs, Journal of Field Studies Vol. 7, 1967, p.66. N.S.P.W., Reconstruction in the Pottery Industry (Manchester 1945) p.14. Pottery has been described as an ideal export, only 5% of the raw materials used need to be imported and porcelain or higher class e.ware had high values in proportion to bulk. P. Gazette, 1 January, 1924, p.145, raw material costs amounted to 3% of the industry's turnover. The Times, 21 January 1917, R. Sheriton.

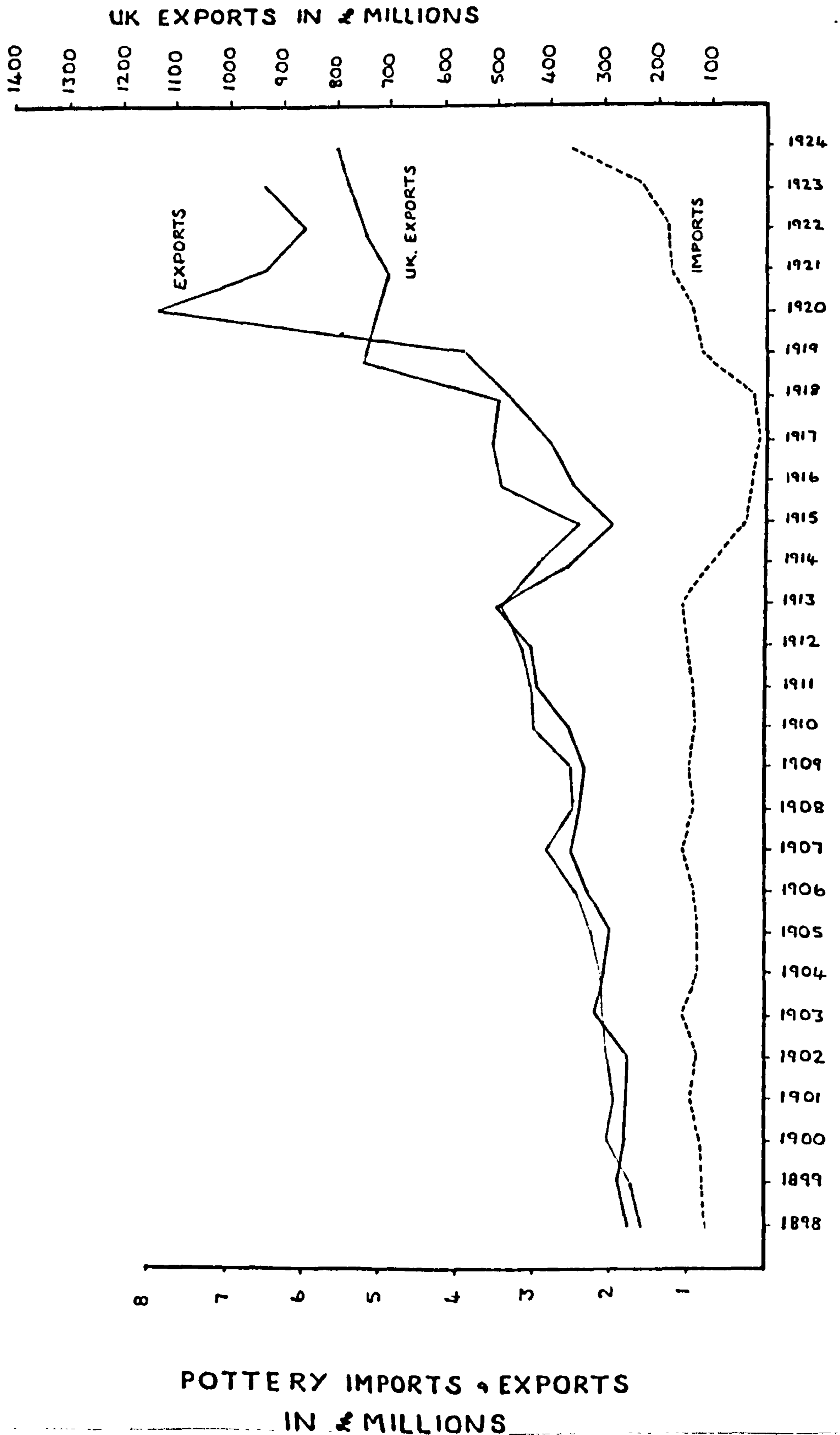
52. See Appendix 1 for rank order of overseas markets.

53. J.C. Wedgwood, Staffordshire Pottery, pp. 191-193. Dodd in Schonfield, op.cit., p.272. U.S. Report 1915, p.31. Royal Worcester Porcelain Co., Director's Minute Book, p.197. The Times, 21 January 1919, Hanley Correspondent.

54. Meakins, Johnsons and Grindleys dominated the US trade. W.H. Grindley, Ernest and Alfred Johnson married Americans, P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1918, p.723.

Table 4Imports and Exports of Pottery and Total UK Exports by Value, 1898-1924.

Sources: Annual Statements of the Trade of the United Kingdom, 1909 (1910) to 1925 (1926). B. Mitchell & P. Deane, Abstract of British Historical Statistics (CUP 1962), Overseas Trade 3, pp. 283-284.



of British pottery exports; by 1925 America received only 14.97%. For the large firms (70% of ceramic exports to the US were made in 19 potteries) the dislocation in their trade and forms of employment was considerable.<sup>55</sup>

By contrast, exports to 'British Possessions', as opposed to 'Foreign Countries', was expanding. Exports of pottery to the empire increased from 32.3% of total pottery exports in 1900 to 51.44% by 1925. Pottery manufacturers were seen embarking on 'imperial tours' of their main markets. In 1917 a manufacturer, when asked to write on ceramic export markets stated that Staffordshire sent her products 'throughout the King's Dominion and wherever the British flag is flown on the Seven Seas'. In common with other British staple industries the pottery industry emerged from the depressed trading of the 1870-1890 period heavily and increasingly reliant on traditional export outlets. In a growing hostile world ceramic market Staffordshire clung to those markets which she could supply with existing products. As a potter admitted in 1909, his industry had been 'satisfied to maintain, not extend its sales'.<sup>56</sup>

The result was that the existing production methods which accompanied these products for the traditional imperial markets continued in large

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55. For continuing importance of US trade, P. Gazette, 1 January, 1926, p.485. The US 'infant' pottery industry was sufficiently strong by 1914 to lower her tariffs by 20%.

56. 'British Possessions': a category used by the Annual Statements of Trade to include nine areas from the 'Channel Isles' to the 'West India Islands'. P. Cunliffe-Lister, Hansard, 30 June, 1927, col. 609. Report of the Tariff Commission on the Pottery Industry, in Pottery Gazette, 1 April, p. 472ff and 1 May, 1907, p. 593ff; also 1 November, 1909, p.1290, 1 January 1914, p.90. W. Rhodes and 12 December, 1917, p.1188. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 17 February, 1914, p.9. For exports to 'colonies' see E. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire (1968) pp. 151 and 191, using examples of cotton, coal, iron and steel. M.W. Kirby, The Decline of British Economic Power Since 1870 (1981) p.6ff. Pollard, Development of the British Economy, p.22 notes that nationally 'the proportion of British overseas commerce that went to the colonies had been stationary or declining in the half-century to 1900'.

sections of the industry.<sup>57</sup> When technological change was forced on the potters by the war or intense bouts of foreign competition in certain sectors of the industry, the impact on working methods, customs and union rules was immense.

A relationship between export performance and industrial relations in exporting industries has been suggested most recently by Cronin.<sup>58</sup> In the pottery industry the export profile for 1898-1924 (see Table 4) does seem to display a close connection with trade union organisation and action. The generally difficult period for unionism in pottery from 1870 to 1900 corresponds with an overall decline in exports of 1.68% (UK exports only increased by 5.4% in this period). In our period export and union expansion seem linked.<sup>59</sup> In particular, rises in export levels seem to coincide with the major bargaining and disputes phases. For example, the 1906-7 union formation, the 1906-8 and 1910-11 sanitary strikes, the large jump in membership from 1915 onwards and the 1923-24 conflict, all seem tied in with export growth periods. The leap in pottery exports during the war owed much to government prohibition of trading with German firms and the active help of the commercial research and consular departments. By 1916 it was declared that Germany

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57. A link between traditional markets and pottery design is suggested by the Balfour Committee on Industry and Trade, 1926-27, Vol. 364, 'Factors in Industrial and Commercial Efficiency', pp. 364-67.

58. Cronin, *ibid.*

59. See Table 4. Ashworth, *op.cit.*, pp. 139-141, using W. Schlote, British Overseas Trade from 1700 to the 1930s (1952) pp. 125-128, notes that nationally the price inflation of 1900-1914 lessens the scale of industrial growth figures given in constant prices. However, as G.D.H. Cole and R. Postgate, The Common People (1961 ed.), p.496 pointed out, even allowing for a rise in prices of one third between 1896-1913, 'the expansion of exports was still remarkable enough'. For a similar view see D. Landes, The Unbound Prometheus (1969) p.230.

and Austria had been 'shut out almost entirely from both home and overseas markets'. Seventytwo porcelain factories alone closed in Germany.<sup>60</sup> Conversely, the periods of export decline are concurrent with union contraction and defensive, reactive dispute activity by potters, as in 1900-1902, 1908-10 and 1921.<sup>61</sup> This relationship between export movements and industrial relations is strengthened since we know that the larger companies dominated the export markets as well as supplying the principal union leaders.<sup>62</sup>

Table 5a

Percentage of Total Pottery Exports per Sub-Industry by Value, 1904-1924.

	1904. %	1908. %	1912. %	1916. %	1920. %	1924. %
Earthenware	78.17	71.34	68.55	73.76	59.45	55.00
China	8.99	5.95	5.59	7.12	3.51	4.70
Sanitary	Na	11.73	16.83	9.79	14.30	19.58
Electrical & Chemical	12.83	4.25	1.44	1.92	2.64	4.06
Tiles	Na	6.14	7.33	7.37	8.07	8.22
Jet & Rockingham	0.58	0.59	0.27	0.04	Na	Na
<b>Total Exports:</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Annual Statements of the Trade of the United Kingdom, 1909, Cd. 5159 (1910), to 1925 (1926). (The figures for output by weight are incomplete).

60. P. Gazette, 1 December, 1917, p.1188 and 1 September 1914, pp. 1069, 1074-75. See advertisement of Cauldon's, op,cit., 1 November, 1914, p.1271, noting that 'Enquiries are especially solicited in regard to the supply of pottery hitherto purchased from Germany'. For the role of the Board of Trade in assisting the 'capture' of German trade: P. Gazette, 1 January, 1916, p.151 and 1 October, 1918, p.779.

61. See L. Gazette, pottery industry reports for 1900-1902, 1908-1910 and 1921. 1920s depressed trading see Pollard, Development of the British Economy, p.214 and J. Thomas, 'The Pottery Industry' in Britain in Depression (1935), p. 413, as quoted in Pollard, *ibid.*

62. P. Gazette, 1 September 1918, p.723. See Ch. 3 for the employment background of pottery union officials.

Table 5b

Proportion of Pottery Export Production within each Sub-Industry by Value, 1907-1924.

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	<u>1907. %</u>	<u>1912. %</u>	<u>1924. %</u>
Earthenware	48.24	41.31 (incl. Jet & Rock.)	51.83
China	18.99	14.42	15.34
Sanitary	21.07	36.24	51.75
Electrical & Chemical	27.73	NA	22.12
Tiles	24.28	37.25	31.18
Jet & Rockingham	NA	NA	1.80

Source: Calculated from the Census of Production for 1907 and 1924, and the Annual Statements of Trade 1909, 1913 and 1925.

In order to understand how the pottery's product markets added to the fragmentation of the industry, we must recognise the differing effect of exports on each sub-industry. Clearly earthenware and sanitary ware provided the bulk of pottery industry exports (between 75 and 85%). The contribution of china, electrical and chemical ware, tiles and jet and rockingham was very small (see Table 5a). However, each sub-industry differed in the balance between its home and export market (see Table 5b). Earthenware exported between 40 and 50% of output whilst china only sent 15 - 19% abroad. The main division was between china and jet and rockingham on the one hand and the other four sub-industries who exported 20 - 50% of their output. If we take only the three Census of Production measurements we do not capture the changing effect of exports within each sub industry. China might be a generally low exporter but for individual firms such as Aynsley's virtually their entire output was exported and their industrial life bound up with

foreign trade. Also there could occur short term changes in export participation. In the First World War China suddenly exported 40% of her wares as Longton replaced German and Austrian suppliers. This period of prosperity for Longton not only led to strengthened union organisation in that town but the establishment of minimum, standard rates across the sub-industry for the first time ever. For the sanitary and tile sections the opposite held true. Sanitary's export role was growing steadily until 1914 but during the war the general interruption to national building programmes virtually shut the sub-industry. This was a huge blow for the potter's union. Whereas sanitary workers had formed the shock troops of the newly-formed union in the 1900s, during the vital war period they were disbanded.<sup>63</sup>

Pottery's product markets were significant for work and unionism in three main ways. Firstly, the split between crockery, a semi-luxury consumer good and other industrial products led to a relatively restrained sense of industrial power among potters. Secondly, the differing relationship between each sub-industry and its home/export market participation added to the differentiation within the industry as a whole. Thirdly, the general composition of the industry's markets and the unchanging nature of demand which the imperial sectors maintained, helped perpetuate certain forms of technology, work and customs which made future changes difficult.

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63. For relative strength of sanitary and china exports see Appendix II and N.S.P.W., Reconstruction, p.14. Women in Industry Committee, 1919, Cmd. 167, pp. 122 and 124. Hansard, 30 June, 1927, Col. 602. P. Gazette, 1 February, 1924, p.288. Times I.F.T. Supplement, in loc. cit. 'Sanitary Ware' and 6 May, 1918, p.32.

The industrial performance suggested by pottery's market figures is underwritten by the industry's output levels. Employers in 1918 asserted that 'the pottery industry had not been remunerative to the manufacturers for the last twenty-five years, whilst Gay and Smyth speak of' the long period of stagnation which had dominated the industry since the 1890s.<sup>64</sup> These statements are over-simplified. Different sections of the industry varied in terms of output and profit just as they varied in market performance. By using a combination of contemporary reports and statistical series it is possible to track the continuing changes in demand, output and employment. In absolute terms the changes were often small, but for the potters concerned these movements could represent considerable short term dislocation.<sup>65</sup>

Export and general output evidence reveals that the period 1900-1924 breaks down into three main parts: 1900-1914, 1914-1920 and 1920-1924. For most manufacturers 1900-1914 contained a trend of gradually expanding demand, especially in exports, punctuated with important contractions in 1900-1902, 1904-1905, 1908-1909 and 1914. There was no single year in which every section of the industry performed well. 1912 might have qualified had it not been for the effects of the miners' strike.<sup>66</sup> 1908-1909 was the worst period. Home and foreign markets were

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64. For the negative verdicts see Gay & Smyth, op.cit., p.11. Major Wedgwood, CATU COLL: The National Council of the Pottery Industry, Reprinted from the Staffordshire Sentinel, 1918, Jan. p.2. The Times, 24 June, 1919, p.10.

65. Cf. Sam Clowes Scrapbook No. 1, CATU COLL: cutting dated 1 April, 1907. P.L. Payne, British Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century (1974) p.48 for differing performances within industries. See Chapter 4 below for an examination of profit levels.

66. For increase in output by value from 1907-1924 of 132.30% (pottery) and 117.42% (UK) at current prices see Census of Production, in loc.cit., and Mitchell & Deane, Statistical Abstract, Miscellaneous Production Statistics 14. The monthly reports on the pottery industry in the L. Gazette contain a qualitative report on output, trade and employment and, from 1910, a sample based set of figures for changes in wages paid and numbers employed.



depressed in every section and unemployment was widespread. This phase saw some of the most bitter disputes of the entire period and unemployment agitation at its strongest in the Potteries.<sup>67</sup> By contrast in 1906-1907 the industry was in 'a far more flourishing state than has been the case for a number of years'. From late 1910 until 1913 trade and output expanded strongly. In April 1911 it was stated that 'by common consent trade has never been so good'. £40,000 more was paid out in wages than 1908-1909 while 1912-1913 experienced the highest price and output levels in most potters' memories.<sup>68</sup> However, after initial dislocation, 1914-1920 was an exceptional growth period for the majority of the industry. Home demand was 'greater than the manufacturers can supply' and firms also found new opportunities in foreign markets as enemy companies withdrew. One firm supplanted twenty-six German competitors in the South American market.<sup>69</sup> Except for the temporary closure of sanitary production 1916 was greeted with the claim that business 'was never better'.<sup>70</sup>

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67. CATU COLL: 1924 Wage Negotiations A., p.716, for 'poor trade' claim. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1908, p.940, and 1 January, 1921, p.91. W. Fishley-Holland, Fifty Years a Potter, (Pendley Manor 1958), p.15. CATU COLL: Finance Ledger, 1908 entries.

68. P. Gazette, 1 July, p.936 and 1 October, 1906, p.1177; 1 January, 1907, p.71, and 1 July, 1910, p.793.

69. 'War boom': see L. Gazette entries on pottery industry 1914-1920. M. Wedgwood, 1924 Wage Negotiations, *ibid.* and S. Dodd, p.E.2. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 1 April, 1918, p.9. British and US army demand was high. P. Gazette, 1 December, 1917, p.1188. Stringer, New Hall Porcelain, p.62. G.C. Allen, British Industries and their Organization (1933), p.15ff. P. Gazette, 1 September, p.1081 and 1 October, 1914, p.1202; 1 January, p.86 and 1 December, 1915, p.1353, and 1 January, 1916, p.151.

70. Poor performance of sanitary and tiles. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1918, p.876; 1 March, 1920, p.379; 1 Sept., 1915, p.1011, and 1 May, 1916, p.601. Times I.F.T. Supplement, August 1917, p.iii and 6 May, 1918, p.32. Mitchell and Deane, Statistical Abstract, Table 4, p.239. Kirkaldy, British Labour, p.60. CATU COLL: 1924 Wage Negotiations A., p.N. P. Gazette, 1 November, 1916, p.1271, and 1 July, 1917, p.697. CATU COLL: L.399, Ridgway Co. to N.A.S., 14 October, 1915 re shortage of labour.

For most pottery manufacturers the only problems caused by the war were shortages of raw materials and labour, whereas the third period, 1920-1924 could not have been more different. After the collapse of the 1920-1921 replacement boom demand was low as foreign competition grew and hostile tariffs were erected abroad. The large crowds of unemployed which formed in the market-places of the Six Towns in 1921 and 1922 were to be a feature of the region for the remainder of the decade. Demand recovered slightly in 1923-1924. Once more the sanitary and tile sections outputs were out of step as they benefitted from re-opened foreign markets and renewed domestic building. In 1924 demand even exceeded supply in these sections.<sup>71</sup>

In general the economic performance of the pottery industry appears to have resembled the experience of the older staple industries of Britain during these three decades. Between 1900 and 1913 a broad recovery is apparent from the slow growth and low prices of the 1870-1900 period. During the war period both general industrial and pottery output fell but this must be placed in the context of high demand, operation at full capacity and sharply rising prices. The available evidence indicates that the pottery industry participated in the rapid expansion of the post-war replacement boom and suffered from the contraction of demand which followed. In common with the older

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71. 1920-24 slump in pottery output except sanitary and tiles. P. Gazette, 1 February, 1921, p.288 and 1 January 1922, p.116. Board of Trade Report on Pottery, 1946, p.3. CATU COLL: L.499, 'Operations Statement to Committee of Inquiry', 4 July, 1924, notes how 'sanitary fireclay and tiles have such a demand for goods that it very much exceeds the supply'. See also CATU COLL: 'Accountant's Report to Special Committee of Inquiry into Wages in the Pottery Industry 1924', passim for variations in performance between the sub-industries.

industries pottery found the contraction of markets and the rise of large-scale, direct foreign competition a serious problem in the 1920s.<sup>72</sup>

However, while the pottery industry's performance seems to have paralleled the development of the major sectors of British industry this level of generality is of limited analytical use. The general picture conceals many details and divergences from the overall trend which are important in understanding the experience of the potters. Firstly, Lomax describes the pottery industry in the twentieth century as a relatively stagnating industry comparable to mining, textiles, clothing or drink. Yet on closer inspection his index shows that for the years 1900-1924 pottery's annual average increase in productivity was 2.4, the sixth highest of all industries and well above the national average of 1.6 per annum. These figures for pottery are entirely consistent with the evidence we have on reduced numbers of workers and the increased use of technology by certain sections of the industry.<sup>73</sup>

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72. For the general period, Gay & Smyth, British Pottery Industry, p.9, Fig. 1.4 appear to have taken only the 1907 and 1924 Census of Production figures and ignored the 1912 results. Consequently their graph moves in the opposite direction to actual pottery output 1907-12. UK economy: Ashworth, Economic History, p.34. Pollard, Development of British Economy, Chap. III for national growth pattern and p.124ff on the general decline of pottery in the 1920s. He also notes the growth of the electrical sub-industry. Landes, Prometheus, pp. 368-69. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, p.150.

73. Note: it is difficult to construct an index of pottery output (see S. Pollard & P. Robertson, The British Shipbuilding Industry, 1870-1914 (1979) p.26ff for the use of output versus exports as indicators of industrial performance or success). Pottery output figs. are subsumed within the national glass and clay category. The gaps in the export figures make even an estimate of output impossible (based on the assumption that exports = 37% of output). An attempt to construct an index on this basis (comparable to Hoffmann's or Lomax's) produced annual growth rates greatly at variance with contemporary reports. Instead we can compare pottery output 1907, 1912 and 1924 with national census figs, see Mitchell & Deane, op.cit. Table 14. This indicates that pottery output broadly paralleled the UK pattern. (cont'd p.38).

Secondly, as we have seen, the sub-industries of pottery manufacture performed very differently over the whole period and especially in terms of the short-term changes they experienced. The result was that in the same year or month different sub-industries could be enjoying entirely opposite trading, output or employment positions, as in the Great War. These detailed differences from the national economic trends are vital in appreciating the specific economic contexts within which pottery owners and workers acted. Also, by reconstructing the month by month profile we can begin to detect the seasonal rhythms of the industry which helped shape the potters wider work experience and upon which management and union strategies were based.

#### 1.4 Foreign Industry

The actions of foreign ceramic producers had both direct and indirect repercussions for the working lives of the Staffordshire potters. The direct effect came as German and Austrian manufacturers, for example, took away trade and therefore employment from the potter. The indirect consequence came via the intensified competitive environment which foreign pottery manufacturers helped to create, which in turn resulted in

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73.(cont'd). However, Lomax's productivity index (which he uses as a measure of industrial performance, see K.S. Lomax, 'Growth & Productivity in the United Kingdom' in D.H. Aldcroft & P. Fearson (eds.), Economic Growth in Twentieth Century Britain (1969), Ch. 2 Table 3 pp. 12 and 26) shows pottery's productivity increasing above the national average. Also, as in other industries total output by volume dropped during the war yet demand was high and not fully met, and all available manpower was fully in use. Similarly, G.C. Allen, op.cit., p.15ff notes that nationally in the early 1920s output and exports were lower than in 1910-1914 yet that output of the 1920s was sold at much higher prices. The same held true for pottery, see Accountants Report, in op.cit., passim.

important changes in local managerial strategy and labour policies. An academic debate continues over the questions of whether the British entrepreneur 'failed' or how to define and measure a putative 'Great Depression' in the 1870-1900 period. It is often forgotten that contemporary businessmen were not only aware of foreign competition but highly concerned.<sup>74</sup> It is necessary therefore to find out how real the impact of foreign producers was and how British masters perceived and reacted to the challenge.

Pottery manufacturers' public reaction was often one of alarm. A ceramic textbook published in 1898 opened with the warning that Britain's pottery industry 'should be roused to an appreciation of the fact that her commercial position is seriously assailed'. Successive trade journal editorials chronicle what they saw as the increasing grip of foreign potters on world markets. As one piece claimed: 'unhappily the lead which this country once held in the pottery markets of the world has in recent years been reduced very considerably by manufacturers in enemy countries'.<sup>75</sup> Yet while those views may have been genuinely held it is revealing how consistently manufacturers raised the spectre of foreign

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74. E.H. Hunt, British Labour History 1815-1914 (1981), p.107 points out the neglect of an international perspective in labour history. For the academic debate on retardation see summaries in Aldcroft, Development of British Industry, pp. 12-27; the essays in D.H. Aldcroft and H.A. Richardson, The British Economy 1870-1939 (1969) and D.N. McCloskey & L. Sandberg, 'From Damnation to Redemption: Judgements on the Late Victorian Entrepreneur', Explorations in Economic History, 9 (1) 1971-2. For the contemporary debate and use made of 'foreign competition' see: A. Shadwell, Industrial Efficiency. A Comparative Study of Industrial Life in England, Germany and America (1906) p.447 and S. & B. Webb, Industrial Democracy (1913 edn.) p.xxvii.

75. Binns, Ceramic Technology, p.ix. B. Moore, in H.B. Gray & S. Turner (eds.), Eclipse or Empire (1916). Times I.F.T. Supplement, August 1917, p.104. P. Gazette, 1 August, 1921, p.1393. For an acceptance of the industry's 'failure' see Williams, 'The Pottery Industry', in loc.cit., p.308.

competition, during wage bargaining or inquiries on potters' health, as a reason for their inability to act on such issues. As unionists noted manufacturers over-played their hand by continuing to plead 'foreign competition' even in times of expanding Staffordshire exports and falling foreign imports. It was a tactic used from the 1870s at least.

Manufacturers cut prices and wages rather than radically reorganise production.<sup>76</sup> What is important is that masters and workers differed over what they each saw as the relevance of foreign competition and what the appropriate response should be. The issue forms a continuous theme from the wage disputes of the 1900s down to the argument over protective tariffs in the 1920s.

Without doubt some foreign pottery industries expanded and exported at higher rates than their British counterparts. However, if we examine the pottery industry in more detail it becomes clear how varied the impact of foreign industry was on the domestic manufacturer and worker. For instance, Bernard Moore wrote an article in Eclipse or Empire in 1916 on the pottery industry. He clearly showed how 'the foreigner' had secured large parts of the cheaper trade but Britain 'still held first place in the higher end of the market'. Similarly certain manufacturers at the British Pottery Fair in February 1913 were intent on not just 'holding their own, but of gaining ground' in the world markets. Also as L.L. Grimwade noted in 1907, Germany was not competing directly with

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76. Foreign competition was not new to the industry, see: Royal Commission on the Depression of Trade and Industry, 1st Report, 1884, C. 4021, p.107. Report of the N. Staffs Chamber of Commerce, pts: 7 & 10. P. Gazette, 2 April, 1894, p.359 for manufacturers' use of foreign competition in arguments over protective factory legislation regarding lead poisoning.

Britain, since she was producing and exporting very different products.<sup>77</sup> This helps put in perspective the figures used by some manufacturers and commentators. The report of the Tariff Commission on pottery in 1907 reflected the varied effect of foreign industry. In the early period, china bore the brunt of foreign competition while the sanitary section almost monopolised world trade. Great care is necessary therefore when using the available statistics on the world pottery market in this period.<sup>78</sup>

Between 1895 and 1913 British pottery exports increased 70.64%, the United States increased 1,432.34%, the Germans 160.46%. British exports were expanding but not at as fast a rate as the US or Germany. Britain was still the producer and exporter of the largest range of pottery in the world. Indeed the competition from the US and Germany was highly localised and specific. America's infant sanitary and electrical industries were only beginning to compete for areas of the Canadian and her own American market. Germany's main role in world markets was as an exporter of very cheap ware which Britain did not even produce.<sup>79</sup>

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77. Times Engineering Supplement, 23 April, 1913, p.25, stated that Staffordshire was still maintaining a firm hold on international trade. See Table 4 for relation of pottery exports to imports. L. Grimwade, P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1907, p.1315.

78. Report of the Tariff Commission, in P. Gazette, 1 April, p.472ff and 1 May, 1907, p.593ff. Import figs. calculated from the Annual Statement of Trade, in loc.cit. For strength of specific areas of foreign competition see J. Ward, Hansard, 23 July, 1914, Cds. 631 and 2079. P. Gazette, 1 February 1906, p.210. Position of sanitary and china, P. Gazette, 1 May, 1907, p.71.

79. U.S. Report 1915, p.650 shows that the majority of German exports were cheap china. German felspar was  $\frac{1}{4}$  the price of the bone used by Staffordshire manufacturers. Only 15 German factories made earthenware.

Similarly, the effect of imports on the British market was very specialised. Although imports of pottery increased by 18% between 1900 and 1913 it was one section, the china trade, which bore the brunt of the competition. Yet china only accounted for one tenth of the home market: the other nine tenths were made up of mainly earthenware and sanitary ware. It was not until 1926 that earthenware began to be imported into Britain and the sanitary trade never saw an American lavatory sold in this country. There is no doubt that the results for the china section were serious. In 1906 of the £1½ million worth of china bought in Britain, Longton supplied only £500,000 worth. It was estimated that this competition resulted in a loss of £¼ million in wages per annum for china workers. Nearly 20% of Germany's exports were targeted at this one small section of the UK market. A recognition of the localised effect of foreign competition enables us to unravel the contemporary debates.<sup>80</sup> Manufacturers very skillfully tried to use china's experience as a reason for obtaining protective tariffs and lower wages in the huge earthenware trade which was largely free of foreign competition.<sup>81</sup> Also, the strength of foreign competition changed significantly. As Table 4 indicates imports were almost entirely shut out of the domestic market during the war and British manufacturers

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80. P. Gazette, 1 January, p.93 and 1 February 1906, p.191 and 1 November, 1907, p.1315. For lithographic competition see M.R.C. MSS/39A/ASL/1/16. Minute Book of Amalg. Society of Lithographers, 22 June, 1928, p.243.

81. For the complexity of the debate over foreign competition within the industry and a skillful debunking of the earthenware manufacturers' spurious case see: Hansard, 30 June, 1927, Cee. Stage of Finance Bill, Cols. 603-649, especially E. Brown, 'a great part of the competition from which the bone china section ... has suffered did not come from abroad at all, but came from the manufacturers in the very same area'. See also 18 July, Cols. 133-152.



(including china) were even able to replace German ones in countries outside the Empire. In the 1920s foreign competition became very acute as Japan and Czechoslovakia began competing directly with British products in large areas of her overseas markets.<sup>82</sup>

An objective examination of why foreign potters were producing different ware types from Britain and why certain countries could compete very effectively with certain Staffordshire sub-industries does not exist. Such a task lies outside the aims of this study. What concerns us is the subjective arguments manufacturers used to explain their predicament. Their reasoning had a great influence on the course of industrial relations in pottery; their public pronouncements especially, helped shape the popular consciousness of the Potteries at certain moments in the period.

The three main strands of the pottery masters case concerned technology, state aid and tariffs.<sup>83</sup> As was noted at the time, manufacturers turned conflict over new technology and working methods into much wider, less focussed concerns regarding foreign competition. T.B. Johnston was clear that new technology would cheapen production and stated that 'it is not cheap labour and cheap materials only that are the greatest factors of cheap production, but it is quantity of production coupled with the efficient use of labour-saving machinery'.<sup>84</sup> During the 1908, 1911 and 1923/4 disputes, in particular, masters translated union resistance to new machinery into questions of national

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82. Hansard, 14 July, 1919, col. 1049 and 30 June, 1927, col. 631. P. Gazette, 1 January, p.39 and 1 February, 1920, p.195; 1 May, 1923, p.852 and 1 January, 1926, p.485 (for how the largest companies were not affected by foreign competition).

83. U.S. Report 1915, pp. 24, 41, 54, 601 and 621. Robert Shenton, Times I.F.T. Supplement, 1917 Pottery Edition. Hansard, 30 June, 1927 cols. 618, 631. All the complainants miss the point that German, Austrian and Eastern competition was highly localised.

84. CATU COLL. L612 11 June, 1911. T.B. Johnston.

economic survival. The argument put to the public was that Germany or America could produce up to 133% more than Staffordshire on some machines. What the potters' union had to do was uncover the assumptions contained in these arguments. These included the facts that German wages were one third lower than Staffordshire's, their hours longer and their division of labour quite different. Similarly manufacturers contended that only state aid would enable the new technology to be developed. The campaign for state assistance looked to raise a unified industrial consciousness and ignored the real issues of what kind of technology and how to control it. In the same way industrialists in the Potteries argued for protective tariffs at the political level by conjuring up the demise of the Staffordshire pottery industry due to overwhelming foreign competition.<sup>85</sup>

Clearly the growth of the world pottery market in the early 20th century was an event of great significance for Staffordshire's industry. The distinction between rhetoric and reality is crucial to understanding that significance. Manufacturers' perception of foreign producers deeply coloured their stance on technical questions within the potbank. These stances provided useful contributions to wider managerial strategies and also suggest to us ways of understanding manufacturer relations with community and local politics.<sup>86</sup> For the period 1900-1924, foreign competition and its implications proved to be a recurrent motif.

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85. For foreign manufacturers' advantages cited at the time see Times I.F.T. Supplement, 3 June, 1918, p.56. P. Gazette, 1 February 1913, p.157; 1 February 1909, p.321 and 1 November, 1914, p.1263. S. Advertiser, 23 November, 1907, p.5. P. Gazette, 1 November, 1914, p.1312.

86. Dobb, Studies in the Development of Capitalism, pp. 25-6, for the significance of the 'foreign industry' question for industrial relations and politics.

### 1.5 Technology

Technology can be understood as the means by which an industry or a production unit converts inputs into outputs. There are three levels at which the term operates. The first level is the total production process, the workflow: the second level refers to the plant and equipment used in the production process: the third can relate to the technical knowledge of workers and manufacturers.<sup>87</sup> To understand ceramic technology is a prior condition to analysing the detailed forms of work found in the pottery industry. In this section we will firstly present the distinctive features of ceramic technology across the industry and criticise the received idea that pottery manufacture was technologically inert or unchanging during this period. Secondly, an explanation will be offered of the low level of mechanisation and its consequences for the social organisation of production and the levels of control. The technological character of the industry reinforced the segmentation of the workforce.<sup>88</sup>

The explanation for the technology found in an industry depends on a complex explanatory framework. It will be argued that technology and technological change are the produce of choice: that choice is influenced and determined in a number of ways. At the highest level the structure of the economy and the relation of the given industry to that structure influence the technology available. A range of forces operate at the industry level: the nature of demand; capital availability; the

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87. J. Woodward, Industrial Organisation. Theory and Practice (1965), pp. 36-39 for levels of technology. M. Jelineck, 'Technology, Organisation & Contingency', Academy of Management Review 2, 1977, pp. 17-26. L. Sayles, The Behaviour of Industrial Work Groups (New York 1958) passim.

88. E.L. Trist & K.W. Bamforth, 'Some Social & Psychological Consequences of the Long Wall Method of Coal Getting', Human Relations, 4, 1951, pp. 30-38.

nature of ownership; the quality of scientific and technical knowledge; manufacturer perceptions of the relationship between innovation, conflict and efficiency, and finally the scale of replacement costs. The eventual form which technology takes when operating is in turn related to the distances between invention and innovation, the character of diffusion, company form and the ability of workers to influence the translation, installation and running of new technology. It is also necessary to be aware that technological change can vary widely from piecemeal, incremental alterations through to total systemic replacements.<sup>89</sup>

Ceramic technology<sup>90</sup> was relatively atypical in its character and development in the early 20th century. It did not rely on technical progress in other industries nor did it use the materials and machines of the major British staple industries. Ceramic technology did not therefore fit easily into the contemporary models of industrial efficiency and as a result was criticised by outside experts. A delegate to the electrical engineers' conference in 1922 compared his industry with pottery saying:

Thus extremes met. The apostles of the very latest phases of efficiency in production found themselves in an environment which suggested the childhood of man. In almost every respect - layout, lights, and mechanical arrangements - the pottery works visited were primitive in a degree most astonishing to anyone not already familiar with the super conservatism of the potter.

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89. T. Bruland, 'Industrial Conflict and Innovation', Economy & Society, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1982, pp. 117-118. D. Noble, 'Technology and Social Choice. The American Machine Tool Industry', in A. Zimbalist (ed.), Case Studies on the Labour Process (1979).

90. Tracing technological change and diffusion or the connections between invention and innovation is difficult in the pottery industry. Care has been taken in our reconstruction between to chronicle (i) the adoption of new technology not just the filing of patents and (ii) to distinguish between 'best practice' and 'general practice'. See also, F. Celona, 'Ceramic Machinery of the 19th Century', Staffordshire Archaeology, No. 2, 1973, pp. 11-47. A. Lamb, 'Machinery and the Application of Steam Power in the North Staffordshire Pottery Industry, 1793-1914', N.S.J.F.S., Vol. 17, 1971, pp. 50-64.

91. P. Gazette, 1 December, 1908, p.1397 and 1 October, 1922, p.1579.

External criticism was matched by a rather lowly self-image amongst potters regarding the technological sophistication of their industry. In 1917, one manufacturer thought 'certainty of results and ... perfectly regular production are practically unattainable in the present state of knowledge'. Others considered the methods of some potters 'showed little improvement upon those devised by their forefathers'.<sup>92</sup>

The received idea that the pottery industry was technologically backward and unchanging needs careful qualification. The conclusions of past and present commentators of the industry have been too sweeping. Some of the smallest firms were using remarkably out-dated machinery and methods yet other companies were recognised world-leaders in design, plant and equipment and factory lay-out. Moreover, during the 1900-1924 period there was a steady spread of new technology throughout large areas of the industry. In some instances the changes involved were described as 'revolutionary' and when put against the development of other major industries the importance of the changes in pottery production are not diminished. In 1906, an assessment of machinery in the pottery industry demonstrated how 'mechanism is used to advantage in every department'. The Times Engineering Supplement undertook a major piece of industrial stocktaking in 1913. It was pointed out how in ceramics the use of machinery was not uniformly appropriate for every product or stage of production. Moreover, the conclusion was that 'the pottery industry as

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92. N.S.P.W. Reconstruction, p.4. Board of Trade Working Party Reports, Pottery, 1946, p.14. CATU COLL: Report of a Conference of Operatives and Manufacturers on the Pottery Industry, Lawton Hall, 5 & 6 May, 1917, Mfers. pt. iii.

a whole has made much greater progress in the adoption of mechanical appliances than is generally believed'.<sup>93</sup> By 1914 the industry's trade journal admitted that 'a strong current of change has set in ... the average manufacturer (my emphasis), driven by stress of competition, and an ever-growing burden of experience, has been more and more inclined to invoke the aid of science'. Between 1911 and 1924 the increase in technical efficiency was remarked on and ascribed to the 'alterations in the methods of manufacture'. The industry was producing more with less workers, especially after the First World War. This latter period witnessed increased use of casting, reorganisation of production, use of machine printing and the diffusion of earthenware technology to the china section. In short the period was one of marked technological change.<sup>94</sup>

The question then becomes not why was the industry technologically backward but why was the degree of mechanisation so irregular and what implications followed? Fundamentally, clay is a difficult material to which to apply machinery due to its variable tenacity and plasticity.<sup>95</sup> In terms of the market, the demand for pottery did not necessitate standardisation and therefore greater mechanisation. As in engineering down to 1914, the market required diversified not uniform output.<sup>96</sup>

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93. For examples of Staffordshire's world lead in certain machinery lines, Bourry, Treatise, passim; F.A. Sandemann, Notes on the Manufacture of Earthenware (1921) passim and Binns, Ceramic Technology, passim, & especially Figs. 35 & 36. P. Gazette, 1 January 1906, p.90. Times Engineering Supplement, 23 April 1913, p.27, the writer opined that 'it has become possible, to a very large extent, to avoid the employment of manual labour in this industry'.

94. P. Gazette, 1 Oct. 1906., p.1141; 1 May 1914, p.555; 1 Feb. 1915, p.312 & 1 July, 1919, p.715. Note also the increase in the use of electrical power 1907-1924 by 222.69%, Census of Production, 1924 Report, p.217.

95. G.M. Forsyth, How the Potter Works, p.120. A Bennett, Anna of the Five Towns (1902) p.115.

96. S.B. Saul, 'The Market & the Development of the Mechanical Engineering Industry in Britain 1860-1914', Econ. History Review, Vol. XX, 1967, pp. 111-130.

A monitoring of the advertisements for pottery domestic products alone confirms the huge variety of shapes, colours and sizes produced. Middleton's of Langton advertised 22 main categories of product in 1917. As one expert put it: 'Here is an enormous range of articles, shapes and decorations. There is no such thing, basically speaking, as stock'. In Woodward's terms, pottery manufacture was an example of small batch production. Changes in fashion added to the range. Only the war period, with its shortages of labour and material, and the distortion of demand, saw a slight gain in 'the struggle against idiosyncrasy'. The direct effect on bargaining was to localise it within each workshop's product range. Thus a modeller complained in 1919 that only he could bargain for his work since he had to deal with 5,000 shapes!<sup>97</sup>

For many firms, even if they could have standardised their output range, they faced difficulties regarding investment. Harold Plant freely admitted that he wanted to install a roller pug mill after 1910 but his profits would not permit it. Another potter argued that 'the revolutionising [sic] of our factories would be the salvation of the district, but there arises the question of capital ... Here we have never seen any pressing desire on the part of bankers to finance enterprise.'<sup>98</sup> The large proportion of small firms was a barrier to widespread mechanisation. In an industry notorious for internal competition in certain sectors, small firms were under great pressure to cut costs in order to lower prices and maintain trade. Profit for these units were low and could not easily finance new machinery. Most of the smaller

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97. W. Callear, remarks in A. Hollens, Improperly Pugged Clay (NCPi 1924), p.23. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1908, p.568. Times I.F.T. Supplement 1917, Pottery Section Advertisements. CATU COLL: L.573. C. Day wage notice, March 1919. Woodward, op.cit., p.39. Landes, op.cit., p.316. CATU COLL: 'Proceedings of Special C<sup>ee</sup> of Inquiry', 1924, pp. 25 & 54.

98. H.J. Plant, in Hollins, op.cit., p.15. U.S. Report, 1915, calculated from Part 6, p.623ff. P. Gazette, 1 November 1914, p.1312 and 1 January, 1921, p.97. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, p.197.

companies rented their machinery, ovens and premises. They had little incentive to buy their own plant and it was up to the landlord to replace equipment. Very few of the large firms could afford the outlays necessary for oven research.<sup>99</sup> Changes in the basic workflow were difficult given the spatial dominance of the ovens and kilns and their strategic importance to production. The inherited physical layouts of potbanks precluded systemic changes in the production process. William Barton explained the problem to a government inquiry: 'it is impossible to conduct an industry in any other way because in many other works in this district ... it is impossible to build more ovens in the factory'.<sup>100</sup>

The medium to large size firms also evidenced a variable density of technology. The plentiful supply of labour (with few sources of alternative employment) made it less pressing to introduce machinery in all departments; in the American pottery industry the reverse was true. In some cases existing machinery, using more labour than others, was old enough for its overhead costs to be ignored and was often retained. In addition, the industries which surrounded the potters (mining, services and hardly any other manufacturing industry) or with whom they dealt (clay, lead mines, packing) were not technologically sophisticated and provided little innovation spin-off. Only after the Second World War and the advent of labour shortages, higher wages, and a growth in industrial diversity in the region did the pottery industry experience accelerated technological change on a large scale.<sup>101</sup>

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99. For unit size see Chap. 4. 'Special C<sup>ee</sup> of Inquiry, 1924, p.77. W.R. Ormandy, P. Gazette, 1 Feb. 1915, p.181. Times Engineering Supplement, 21 April, 1913, p.8.

100. D.J. Machin, 'The Economics of Technical Change in the British Pottery Industry', unpublished M.A. thesis, Keele, 1973, p.176, for the influence of oven location on workflow. W. Burton, evidence in Minutes of Proceedings before Judge Ruegg, Inquiry into Draft Regulations for the Manufacture of Pottery, 27 November, 1912, Qu. 915.

101. Lack of alternative employment see S. Beaver, 'Cultural Landscape', in loc.cit., pp. 7 & 31. A. Moyes, 'The Industrial Economy of North Staffordshire in the Second World War', N.S.J.F.S., Vol. 16, 1976, p.73.



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The relatively undeveloped state of ceramic science and knowledge in the Potteries lent a peculiar quality to the operation of technology in the industry. The Ceramic Society was told in 1922 that the study of ceramics was almost a hundred years behind the times. Shaw's The Chemistry of Pottery was re-issued in 1900 with the incorrect formulae of its 1837 edition unchanged.<sup>102</sup> The Ceramic Society was only founded in 1900 and the scientific work of J.W. Mellor began as late as 1905. In fact the knowledge of body, colour, glaze and firing properties was almost entirely empirical: the 'rule of thumb' prevailed. For example, in the 1920s the National Council of the industry published a paper entitled Notes on Whiteware Alkaline Casting Slips. On the first page it was admitted that 'the theoretical side has not been fully explored, consequently there is a lack of knowledge of the fundamental principles underlying the process. As a result, the available data is insufficient to explain all the peculiar phenomena which arise during the manufacturing process'.<sup>103</sup> Masters were therefore terrified of changing the more important techniques. Skilled potters at pivotal points in the production process had high degrees of control over their sections of manufacture based on their often superior knowledge. The power of the craftsmen is illustrated by Cuthbert Bailey, head of Royal Doulton. He accepted that 'in pottery when failure occurred, it was always absolute. If pottery was spoiled, it was spoiled irremediably'. His remark also points to why so much technological innovation was applied to those areas of production where skilled workers were strongest in this period.<sup>104</sup>

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102. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1922, p.566. D.G. Beech, 'A Brief Assessment of "The Chemistry of Pottery" by Simeon Shaw (1837)' in The Journal of Ceramic History, No. 7, 1974, p.11.

103. Victoria History, Vol.II, p.34. E.A.R. Werner, Leadless and Low Solubility Glazes (NCPI Hanley, 1925) p.12. NCPI, Notes on Whiteware Alkaline Casting Slip (Hanley 1925) part I, p.3.

104. G. Eyre Stringer, New Hall Porcelain (1949) p.58. P. Gazette, 1 January, 1921, p.97. The Times, 24 January, 1918, p.3.

We have noted the three main conceptions of technology and recognised the complex mix of factors which explain the form of technology found within an industry. The image of the pottery industry as technologically backward has been challenged: an alternative picture of differing degrees of mechanisation in the industry has been offered. There were changes in the forms of technology during the period although in general they were incremental rather than systemic. The variation in the degree of mechanisation and the patchiness of the diffusion of new technology is explained by the properties of clay, the nature of demand and capital availability, as well as the perceived cost effectiveness of new machines, the constraints from inherited layouts and the features of the local labour market. Given that technology may be conceived of as the technical knowledge of workers and manufacturers it has been argued that the late development of ceramic science clearly retarded widespread diffusion of new technology.<sup>105</sup>

These general technological features were of immediate importance for the organisation of work and the character of trade unionism.<sup>106</sup> The wide variation in ware type produced led to the tasks of different work-groups being highly dissimilar; fragmented worker control and bargaining resulted. Pottery manufacture's labour intensiveness meant that control of labour would be a central problem for management. Employers tried to establish real control in our period by introducing new technology in key areas of production which led to conflict. Conflict only served to

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105. Incremental: progressive, piecemeal change. Systemic: total change of operating system. Factors influencing technological diffusion, viz. technical knowledge, N. Rosenberg & W. Vincenti, The Britannia Bridge: the Generation & Diffusion of Technological Knowledge (Camb. Mass. 1978); cost effectiveness, S.B. Saul, 'The Nature and Diffusion of Technology' in A.J. Youngson (ed.), Economic Development in the Long Run (1972), and product specialisation role see P.J. Jeremy, 'Innovation in American Textile Technology during the early 19th Century', Technology and Culture, 14, 1973.

106. Relationship of technology to organisation and control of work: W.H. Scott, J.A. Banks, A.H. Halsey & T. Lupton, Technical Change and Industrial Relations (LUP 1956). Woodward, op.cit., pp. 36ff and 50ff.

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intensify the need for greater real control (in the context of intense commercial competition) which then required new forms or arrangements of technology. The dialectic between technological change and conflict (how technological change both causes and is caused by conflict) will be apparent throughout our analysis of industrial relations in the pottery industry.<sup>107</sup>

### Conclusion

In this chapter we have analysed the changing structure of the pottery industry as an initial step to understanding the form of work and trade unionism there. The industrial structure influenced work and collective action in five main ways. Firstly, the industry's historical development revealed the reasons for pottery's concentrated location, the range of product, the stratification by company type and the high density of work custom. Secondly, the pottery industry of the early twentieth century was highly fragmented. It is argued that this fragmentation by product and company produced a rich mosaic of employer and employment forms. Union organisation and industrial relations reflected that fragmentation.<sup>108</sup> Thirdly the self-image of the potters in each sub-industry differed according to the status of their product and its market performance which affected workers' propensity for collective action.<sup>109</sup> Fourthly, we accepted Aldcroft's injunction to be wary of the generalisation regarding foreign competition in this period.<sup>110</sup> It was found that the

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107. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 6 May, 1918, p.32.

108. J. Child & R. Mansfield, 'Technology, Size and Organisation Structure', Sociology, 6, 1972, p.388.

109. Cronin, *ibid.* T. Matsumura, 'The Flint Glass Makers in the Classic Age of the Labour Aristocracy, 1850-1880', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Warwick, 1976, pp. 11-14.

110. Aldcroft, Development of British Industry & Foreign Competition, p.35. Pollard & Richardson, *op.cit.*, p.6ff, for the need to reconstruct contemporary values and modes of thought within industry, not superimpose views derived from hindsight.

impact of foreign pottery producers was highly localised. Moreover, foreign competition was not accepted as an explanation for all the problems of the industry: foreign competition was instead a controversial topic of debate. Fifthly, the received idea that pottery manufacture was technologically backward was challenged. The varying levels of mechanisation were uncovered and the resultant variations in the social organisation of production and control displayed. Also, the industry has been analysed using a dynamic perspective. Besides the dynamic of conflict generated by technological change and the struggle for control, the economic changes of the period also provided key contexts for the actions of all potters.

Analytically our main aim has been to identify the structure of the industry as a major influence on the activity of the people who worked there. This influence has been construed in two ways. First, we have presented the industry's structure as a set of objective features which influenced and constrained the potters' actions.<sup>111</sup> Second, we are aware of the subjective dimension, whereby potters interpreted and reacted to the structure of their industry. An awareness of the structure of the industry underlies the statements of all potters: with an appreciation of that structure we will be able to decode these assertions. As we shall see manufacturers and workers had their own developed awareness of their industry's main economic features which helped to frame their responses and strategies towards change during this period. This analysis of the pottery industry has provided an explanation of a major external influence

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111. We consider the disaggregate view vital. Gray & Smyth, op.cit. and Warburton, op.cit., for example take only the aggregate. For the importance of industrial structure in analysing labour see R. Price, Masters, Unions and Men. Work Control in Building and the Rise of Labour 1830-1914 (Cambridge 1980) pp. 3 & 22. H.A. Turner, Trade Union Structure, Growth and Policy (1962) passim, e.g. the major two-fold division of textile industry and union.

on work and unionism; in the next chapter we will turn to the internal features of the potters' working lives and how these characteristics related to trade union organisation and action.

## CHAPTER 2

Work and Home

In this chapter the focus is on work in the pottery industry.<sup>1</sup> Historians have a number of analytical tools with which to understand the organisation and meaning of work. Some writers have suggested that the mode of production provides 'a kernel of human relationships from which all else grows'. Others stress that the production process is not just about the production of objects but involves the creation of social relationships.<sup>2</sup> It is maintained that the nature of work and its attendant social relations can provide a basis for comprehending how trade unions are formed and operate. An analysis of work may also tell us a great deal about the social and even the political actions of workers outside the workplace.<sup>3</sup> A detailed reconstruction of the salient features of work in the pottery industry will be undertaken.

The main aim is to discover how potters behaved at work; what forms of consciousness were produced and what was the quality of their social relations? The experience of work is a social one. At the centre of this analysis of work is the workgroup since it was the workgroup which bound workers together by their shared experiences. As

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1. Chapter 2 is divided into six sections. 1 - 4 deal with work experience in the workplace; the last 2 sections examine the inter-relationship between work, home and family. For an indication of the factors which may impact on the work experience, both intrinsic and extrinsic to the workplace, see A. Fox, A Sociology of Work in Industry (1971) p.2.

2. E.P. Thompson, 'An open letter to Leszck Kolokowski', Socialist Register, 1973. M. Buraway, 'Towards a Marxist Theory of the Labor Process: Braverman and Beyond', Politics and Society, 1978, p.268.

3. R. Hyman, Industrial Relations. A Marxist Introduction (1975) p.183. J. Bensman and R. Lilienfeld, Craft and Consciousness (New York, 1973) pp. 336-338.

Sayles points out,<sup>4</sup> the organisation of work contributes significantly to the behaviour of workgroups and in turn the workgroup helps shape the behaviour and beliefs of its members. Our first task is to show that the organisation and basic orientation of the potter's workgroup followed the lines of the production process but that the potter and the workgroup evolved means of adjusting to their work environment. In other words, the way in which potters experienced and acted at work depended neither on the influence of technology nor on the potters' orientations to work alone: it depended on the interaction of the two.<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, we will try to find out what were the principles which underlay the pottery workers' attempts to make sense of their working lives. It will be necessary to uncover and assess the apparently rich forms of custom and practice which operated on the shop floor.<sup>6</sup> Thirdly, the wage contract is one of the most important facets of work experience. The wage system of pottery manufacture was influenced by the organisation and customs of work yet also gave very clear expression to the skill and status divisions which arose from the division of labour.<sup>7</sup> Fourthly, we shall show that the range of social groups was extensive. Inside each potbank the combination of the organisational structure with the characteristics of the workers produced a wide variety of

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4. On the relationship between technology and workgroups see L. Sayles, Behaviour of Industrial Work Groups, Prediction and Control (New York, 1958) pp. 3-6, 165. S.R. Parker, R.K. Brown, J. Child, M.A. Smith, The Sociology of Industry (1980, 3rd ed.) p.101.

5. H. Beynon and R.M. Blackburn, Perceptions of Work (Cambridge, 1972) p.4.

6. On the importance of custom and practice and what has been termed 'the culture of the shop floor' see: E. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men (1964), pp. 344-370. R. MacDonald, Women in the Printing Trades (1904) p.41. H. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America (New York, 1976) pp. 14-15. P.E. Willis, 'Human Experience and Material Production: the Culture of the Shop Floor.' Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham University, Working paper SP. No. 33.

7. W. Brown, Piecework Bargaining (1973) pp. 83-94 and 174.

social groups. The social distinctions among the potters was compounded by the varying ability of workgroups to regulate their toil. In short, it will be argued that the production process was highly segmented; the division of labour extremely sub-divided. These features of work were reinforced by the actions of potters, by their codes of custom and by the industry's wage system. The interaction of the potters with these basic elements of work was responsible for both the marked stratification of the workforce and also resulted in the intense sectionalism which typified the social relations of the potbank.

### 2.1 The Production Process and the Division of Labour

The starting point for our analysis of work in the pottery industry is the production process: the process whereby a clay mix was converted into a finished piece of ceramic ware. Pottery workers spent their working lives intimately involved in this process; in order to understand the potter's work experience we must therefore reconstruct the dominant features of pottery production. In the period 1900-1924 the production process remained as complex as it had been in the nineteenth century. Experts in the 1900s concluded that work in the pottery industry was 'infinitely sub-divided' and that 'probably no more detailed and intricate manufacture exists today'.<sup>8</sup> Any discussion of work in pottery must emphasise the intricacy of a production sequence composed of so many inter-dependent phases. The largest potbanks contained between 100 and 150 departments while even the smaller 'banks used over thirty

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8. W. Burton, Evidence to The Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts, Report, 1906, Q. 17077, p.42. S. Advertizer, 14 December, 1907.



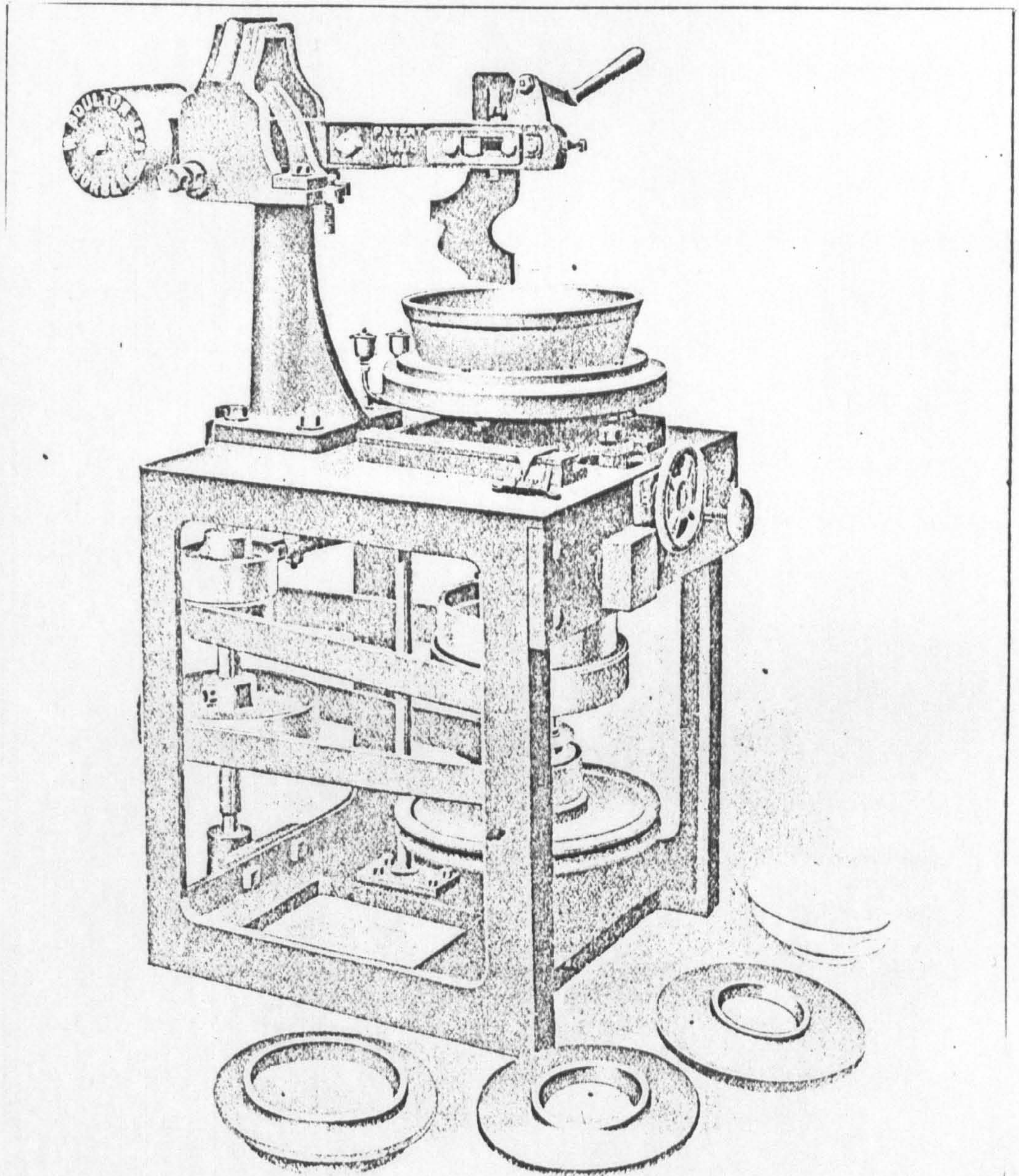
separate sequences. These sub-divisions are well documented in contemporar accounts of pottery making. Graham's Cup and Saucer Land reveals a potbank as a collection of functionally separate workshops, sheds, galleries, studios, ovens, kilns, cellars and warehouses. (See Fig. 1).<sup>9</sup>

There were two main reasons for the complex sub-division of production. Firstly, the product variety and range of even one potbank was often extensive so that each firm had to carry a number of alternative manufacturing processes or sub-processes which could accommodate that variety. Secondly and more important, the generally low level of mechanisation meant that there were few machines which combined or simplified tasks and no machines were introduced which encompassed the work of a whole department. The result was a remarkably unstreamlined production process, a process composed of myriad manual operations. Even where machinery was used the operation was still dependent on manual manipulation. Pottery was therefore a relatively small user of electrical, diesel or steam power and there was a lack of continuous production flow. Addison, Minister of Reconstruction, told the potters in 1918: 'that a proper supply of power would do a great many important things in the Potteries ... though I know of course that your pottery industry is very largely split up into small shops which do not need a great deal of machinery'.<sup>10</sup> Power was not applied to 'making' equipment

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9. For both perceptions and depictions of the production process in pottery see: Times I.F.T. Supplement, January 1918, p.220. Report of a Conference of Operatives and Manufacturers on the Pottery Industry (Darlington, North of England Newspaper Co. 1917), manufacturers submission section iii. W.J. Claxton, In the Potteries (n.d.) p.17. C.J. Noke and H.J. Plant, Common Commodities and Industries. Pottery (1924) passim. M. Graham, Cup and Saucer Land (n.d. 1908?) passim. Making Pottery and Glassware in Britain (n.d.) Anon.

10. Dr. Addison, 'The National Council of the Pottery Industry' p.9, reprinted from The Staffordshire Sentinel, 14 January, 1918.



Picture 1. Boulton's Small Dish Machine with self contained jolly and jigger (see Glossary).

Source: P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1908, advertisement section.

since any power source, other than the hand or foot, was irregular and difficult to standardise or control. A survey in 1920 showed that 21.2% of the respondents did not work with externally powered jigger-drives. By 1924 steam power use was still three times that of electric.<sup>11</sup>

The intricacy of the manufacture of pottery (see Fig. 1) and the low density of machinery, especially the power-driven type, meant that there was poor continuity of production flow. The inherited problems of potbank layout and the low level of ceramic science resulted in bottlenecks and often a production sequence with repetitions and 'doubling back'. One potter thought that most potbanks were an 'agglomeration of units'. The use of high levels of manual labour made for a disjointed industrial process. The survey mentioned above found that the mean distance that pressers had to carry their finished piece was 21.61 feet. The distance between tower and placer, that is the transition from potting shop to firing, ranged from 5 - 100 yards. The problems this discontinuity of production posed for workers were crucial. Samuel Cooper, a platemaker, found that he lost six hours work a week through waiting for clay. Even at Minton's, one of the leading manufacturers, John Gough, a jollier, had a 100 yard walk in order to convey his ware to the next stage of production, namely turning, and consequently lost half a day's work each week.<sup>12</sup> In the 1940s it was found that 'the proportion of man hours spent on actually processing ware is too small compared with the man hours spent on moving the ware in process from

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11. CATU COLL. D42, Schedule of Making Prices. General Earthenware; 53 firm sample, 1920. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1908, p.585; 1 May, p.584 and 1 November, 1913, p.1327. Census of Production, Pottery Report, 1924, p.209. A. Lamb, 'Mechanisation and Application of Steam Power' in the North Staffordshire Pottery Industry 1793-1914, N.S.J.S., Vol. 17, 1977, pp. 50-64.

12. CATU COLL. D42 *ibid.* P. Gazette, 1 October, p.1079.

one operation to another'.<sup>13</sup> Pottery's fragility meant that the human carrier could not be easily replaced. The discontinuities in production produced a cluster of problems and grievances for workers throughout the period, grievances which were expressed at all levels of bargaining and conflict.

However, as we noted in Chapter 1, there were changes in the use of ceramic technology during this period. The two major changes in the production process were in the pressing and firing departments although there were minor changes of technique elsewhere. Without doubt the greatest technological change was the introduction of casting. Given the discovery of certain alkali mixtures casting slips became viable at the turn of the century. Pressers traditionally worked with solid clay. Casting involved working with a simple, liquid clay and mould. Potters found they were working with a new material entirely. Complex shapes could now be made in a single operation whereas the hollow ware presser needed several stages to make such articles. Casting was slowly introduced down to 1914. During the war its use increased rapidly and by the 1920s, hand pressing and hollow-ware pressing in particular had been largely superceded. One expert in 1914 thought casting 'bids fair to revolutionise certain departments of the industry'.<sup>14</sup> Secondly, changes in oven design and firing techniques were introduced. A handful of firms pioneered gas firing in tunnel ovens. Less publicised yet more influential on the intensity of work was the increasing size of bottle

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13. Board of Trade Working Party Reports. Pottery (1946 HMSO) p.3.

14. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, p.195. Binns, Manual of Practical Potting (1922 5th ed.), p.xii. P. Gazette, 1 June 1914, pp. 677 and 701. Lamb, *op.cit.*, p.60.

ovens in order to fire greater units of ware. Cauldons, for example, replaced a 17 feet diameter oven with a 21½ feet model in February 1910 which gave an oven capacity of 6,000 dozen. The large cost of making the saggars for the ovens (£60,000 p.a. was spent unnecessarily on this process in 1908) led to the use of machine presses to replace hand methods. This in turn resulted in new saggarr sizes and shapes which held more ware and therefore involved more work.<sup>15</sup>

In other departments of the production process, changes in technology were more gradual, less dramatic and involved the refining of methods or the increased application of existing machinery. In the mixing and clay preparation department mechanical grinders, blungers and mixers gradually ousted the older hand techniques. In decorating, improved transfer machines were developed. George Hassall of Cobridge produced such a machine thought to be 'so easy to work that a child can operate it ... [and] will effect a great saving of labour in this branch'.<sup>16</sup> Liquid gold made gilding much easier; aerography was a new method of colouring and glazing and litho transfers reduced the difficulty of some forms of painting. By the mid-1920s there were seven ceramic transfer companies in the Potteries who supplied potbanks with transfers ready made, thus doing away with the need to employ a printer on the 'bank'.<sup>17</sup> In hand pressing William Boulton produced a steady stream of improved jiggers

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15. The Times Engineering Supplement, 23 April, 1913, p.27 and 20 November, 1912, pp. 24-25. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1907, p.708; 1 February, 1910, p.192; 1 February, 1913, p.206 and 1 May, 1921, p. 947. W. Callear, Evidence to the Inquiry into Pottery, Draft Regulation, Mins. of Proceedings before Judge Ruegg, 1911, Q. 523. P. Gazette, 1 January, 1916, p.59.

16. U.S. Report 1915, p.439. P. Gazette, 1 June, p.698 and 1 September, p.1066, 1908 and 1 April, 1922, p.583. H.M.I. Factories Report, 1901, p.71. CATU COLL. NEC, 30 March, 1918, Earthenware agreement.

17. Minute book of Amalgamated Society of Lithographers, 22 June, 1928, p.241. Modern Records Centre: MSS/39A/ASL/1/16.

and jollys (see Picture 1). In dipping, machines had proved to be failures; the sorting, warehouse, and packing sections were without any form of mechanical assistance.<sup>18</sup>

There are three major features therefore of the production process which concern us in investigating the work experience of the potter. The complexity and multiple sub-divisions made for a spatially and physically fragmented work environment for the potter. Also, with manual operation dominating production the poor continuity of production flow ensured that the potential for conflict amongst workers as well as between worker and employer was high. Finally, in spite of the low level of mechanisation, the changes in ceramic technology were particularly important since they concerned strategic points within the production process. For key groups of potters the period was one of fundamental change in so far as work was concerned which only enhanced the potential for tension inherent in the production process.

The production process has provided a key analytical starting point. Having examined it in its phases together with the relation between those phases it is now possible to map out the division of labour more clearly (see Fig. 1). However, there is an important distinction to be made. The division of labour is not a direct outcome of the production process. Manufacturers or the formal owners of the production process do not have unlimited freedom to determine the configuration of tasks and jobs which serve that process. On the contrary, the formal owners may set certain important limits, but it is the attributes of workers which they individually or collectively bring to a job which also influence the division of labour.<sup>19</sup> There exists a constant interplay between the

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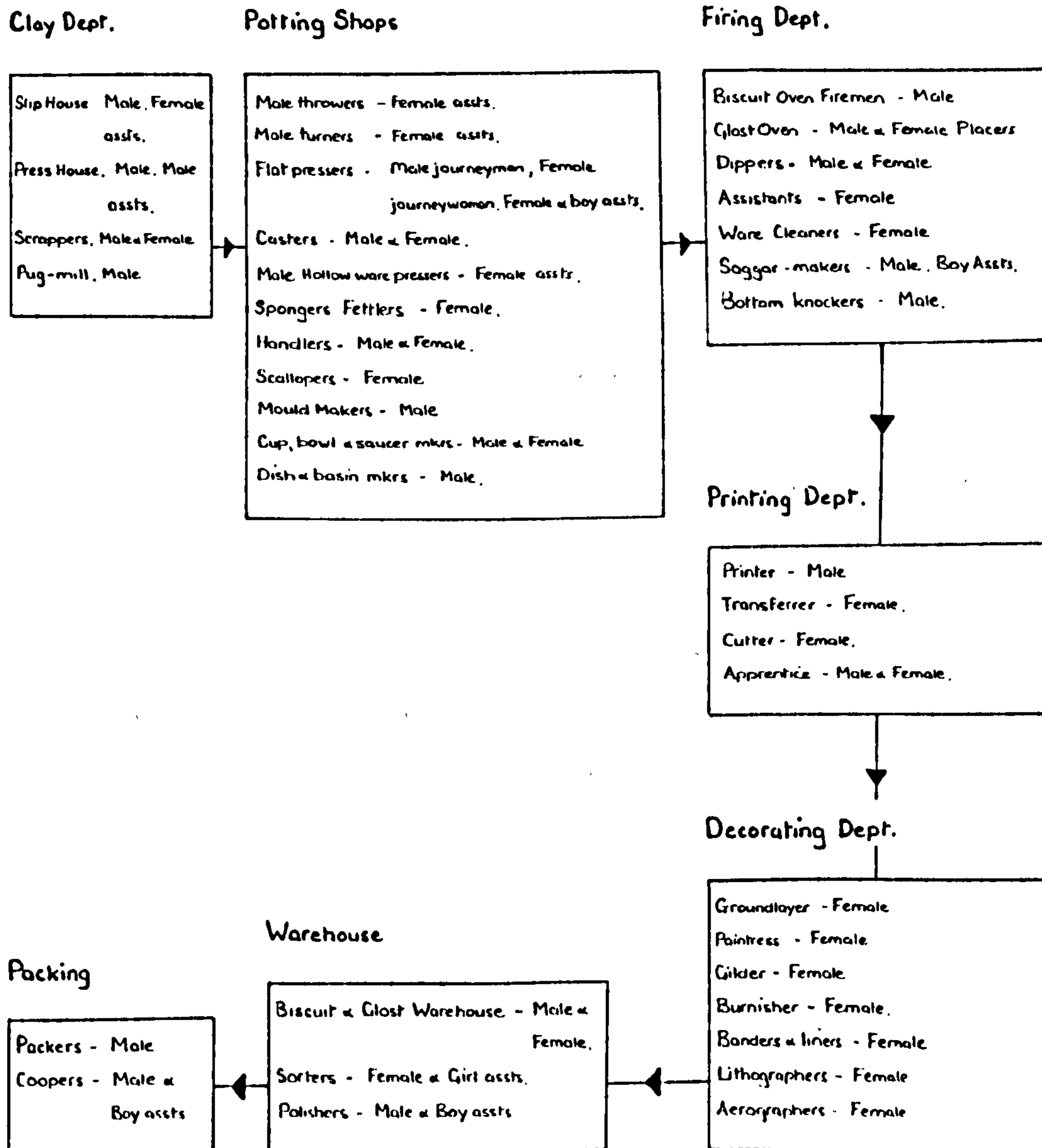
18. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1922, p.585.

19. Sayles, Behaviour of Industrial Workgroups, in loc. cit.

Fig. 1

The Production Process and Division of Labour of Pottery Manufacture

Source: C.J. Noke & H.J. Plant, Common Commodities and Industries. Pottery (1924). C. Binns, Manual of Practical Potting (1922). The Times Engineering Supplement, 2 April, 1913, pp. 25-30. E.A. Sandeman, Notes on the Manufacture of Earthenware (1921).



abilities of owners and workers to define, demonstrate and control the nature of a job or task in detail and hence determine the character of the division of labour in general. The division of labour is conceived of as constantly changing, even though for purposes of analysis we may artificially freeze it at certain points in time.

The first outstanding characteristic of the division of labour in the pottery industry is its very large number of separate occupations. Commentators at the time noted how pottery manufacture was 'subdivided to very fine limits'<sup>20</sup> compared to other industries. In 1913 a survey of a group of factories discovered 87 occupational groups within the production of earthenware. Nine years later an investigator noted 98 separate occupational groups amongst only the skilled workers of the industry.<sup>21</sup> Table 6 condenses the division of labour down to a basic list of 33 main occupations in pottery in 1922 and indicates the numbers employed in each. It is noticeable that there are no clear numerically dominant groups. Instead the potters were made up of a large collection of very small occupational groups. The three largest formed only 10% of the workforce: most groups amounted to between 1 and 4%.

Secondly, a wide range of skills was exhibited within pottery's division of labour. Conceptually, skill may be divided into two types: genuine skill, which is the alliance of a manual facility with knowledge useful to industry; or skill may be socially constructed and attributed

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20. Times I.F.T. Supplement, August, 1917, p.xii, earthenware.

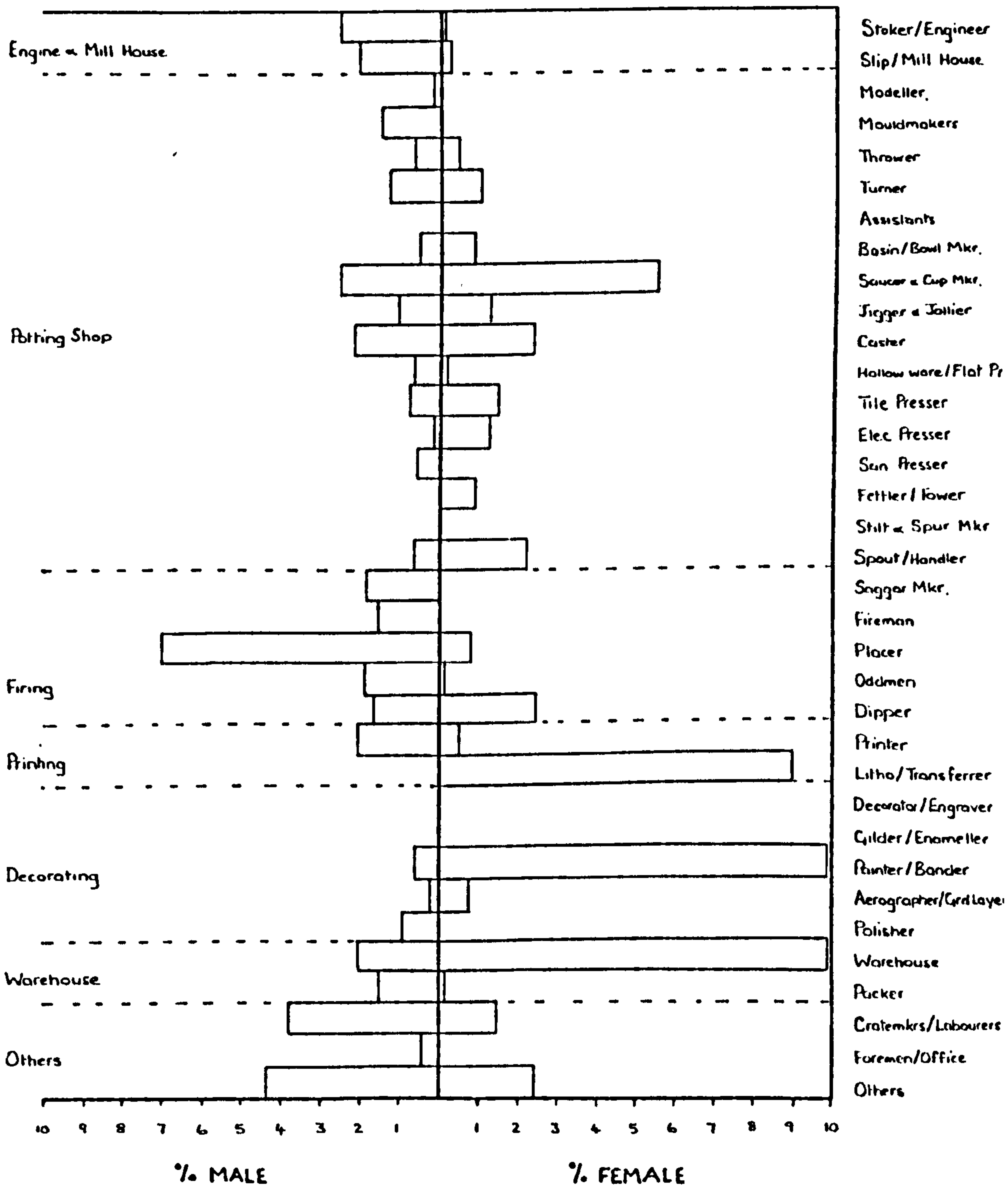
21. U.S. Report 1915, p.425. 1924 Wage Inquiry, Accountant's Report, Wage Tables. For similar examples of the division of labour see: A. Reid, 'The Division of Labour in the British Shipbuilding Industry 1880-1920, with Special Reference to Clydeside', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge, 1980. H.A. Turner, Trade Union Growth, Structure and Policy (1962) pp. 159-168. A Campbell and F. Reid, 'The Independent Collier in Scotland' in R. Harrison (ed.), The Independent Collier. The Coal Miner as Archetypal Proletarian Reconsidered (Hassocks, 1978) pp. 57-64. Landes, Unbound Prometheus, p.303.



Table 6

Size of Occupational Groups in the Pottery Industry 1922

Source: CATU COLL, Census of the Pottery Industry 1922.



to workers by themselves or by others. The label 'skilled worker' may derive from the technology a person uses, from an agreement between management and worker, from workshop custom, or from power relations at the workplace.<sup>22</sup> In pottery skilled operatives were vital to every one of the seven main stages in the production process. Potters were generally renowned for their skill. Most potters described as skilled possessed very real qualities of manual skill and technical knowledge. Yet from the 1870s onwards and particularly in the 1900s the social construction of skill became increasingly important in the light of technological change. At all levels of bargaining considerable efforts were assigned by workers and management to defining new tasks or functions in terms of skill.

Most potters were acutely aware of the special properties of clay. It was the knowledge of these features of the raw material and an awareness of how clay behaves in differing compositions and under varying conditions allied with extreme dexterity which constituted the potter's main skills. Potters, especially the 'makers' spoke of 'humouring' the clay and its 'memory'. As one expert put it:

The art of forming plastic clay into a three dimensional shape is therefore one of stretching or moulding the clay in such a manner, that the structural changes that do take place do not cause the article to go out of shape during the subsequent fire ... It is on these facts that the craft is based.<sup>23</sup>

Any of the makers needed to learn several techniques: assessment of clay composition and quality; centering; how to lubricate the clay during throwing; and how to avoid 'plack', uneven drying or blisters. Differing skills were relevant to all the main occupations in a potbank.

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22. C. More, Skill and the English Working Class 1870-1914 (1980) p.15ff.

23. Machin, 'Economics of Technical Change', p.66. Maker was the common term for a thrower or presser.

Modellers and moulders required knowledge of sculpture; saggarmakers and fitters had an intimate acquaintance with the characteristics of bodies; the control of oven temperatures over long periods was the hallmark of the fireman while the printers, transferers or decorators possessed artistic ability. The dippers' craft resisted every attempt to replace it with a machine and even the polishers, placers and packers knowledge of ware and glaze properties exhibited many skilled traits in their jobs. Contrary to pottery's popular image physical strength was a common requirement of many key occupations, especially in the firing department.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the potter's self-image was usually one of a skilled worker and indeed a craftsman. Today, potters still speak of their 'craft occupation'. In the 1900s the tradition of the potter as a craft worker was immensely strong. Colin Sedgly, a potter's fitter, leaves us in no doubt regarding his skill when he described his work in the following terms in March 1919:

I am not a polisher but a china or potters fitter which requires a lot of training and takes years to learn to become efficient in the business as figures, ewers, vases, bowls, &ctra are made in sections and I have to grind and fit them perpendicular and horizontally true then stick them together with a body composition and send them through the kiln and make them one whole piece, work that requires great care and skill besides mental capacity. There are about 5,000 shapes to remember how they have to be fixed and not put the wrong sizes or parts on one another and you are [also] expected<sub>5</sub> to know if the potter has made any of the parts wrong.

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24. Board of Trade Report, op.cit., p.4. W. Fishley-Holland, Fifty Years a Potter (Pendley Manor 1958) p.7. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1916, p.627. W.T. Yeaman, 'The Geographical Factors Influencing the Major Changes in the Pottery Industry of North Staffordshire, 1945-1965', unpublished M.A. thesis, London, 1968. W. Callear, op.cit., Q.544.

25. N.S.P.W., Reconstruction in the Pottery Industry, p.5. CATU COLL. L573. C. Sedgly, wage demand of March 1919. We use the term craftsman for the highest skilled potters since they possessed both the technical skills and the formal qualifications of apprentice or learnership. Both the skilled potters and those around<sup>them</sup> accepted the term.

Another craftsman was rather more terse and regarded his skill as unquestionable. He wrote: 'it is admitted that the ornamental potter is a highly skilled workman'. The essential feature therefore is not so much that objective, observable skills existed throughout the division of labour but that many skilled potters were highly conscious of their 'gift' or 'calling' as they put it. A potter went so far to assert that 'the history of the craft is to a considerable extent the history of its factories'.<sup>26</sup> It was the new methods, such as casting, which challenged both the objective and subjective aspects of skilled work during the period.

One writer suggested that almost every worker in the pottery industry 'however small his part in the finished product is a skilled craftsman'.<sup>27</sup> However, by identifying the components of skill within each task and the varying status different occupations enjoyed, it is clear that a hierarchy of skill existed within the industry. Table 7 is an attempt to construct such a hierarchy which in broad outline most potters of the time would have recognised.

Table 7 also tries to indicate that this hierarchy was not static during the years 1900-1924. Changes in both technology and attitudes had a strong impact on the skill and status of some potters. The impact was often very specific. The increased use of improved jiggers and jollies meant unemployment or the decimation of the ranks of the hand throwers and turners. With the need for greater precision and uniformity moulds were

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26. CATU COLL. L573 letter of ornamental potter, March 1919. G. Eyre Stringer, New Hall Porcelain (1949) p.xi. P. Gazette, 1 September, 1897, p.1180. See also T. Kasumitsu, 'The Language of Skill' (mimeo paper 1980).

27. G. & M. Forsyth, How the Potter Works (n.d.) p.129. M. Fogarty, The Nuffield Reconstruction Survey of Britain (Oxford, 1945) p.330.

Table 7Skill Hierarchy of Pottery Manufacture

Sources: U.S. Report 1915, pp. 425-427. C.J. Noke & H.J. Plant, Common Commodities and Industries. Pottery (1924). M. Graham, Cup and Saucer Land (n.d.). C. Binns, Manual of Practical Potting (1922).

Skilled Men

Firemen.

Turners. Throwers. Modellers. Mouldmakers.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓  
Stickers-up. Pressers. Dishmakers. Saggarmakers.

Printers. Dippers. Gilders. Engravers.

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓  
Packers. Placers. Head Warehousemen. Casters.

Skilled Women

Paintress. Groundlayer. Liners. Gilders. Transferrers.

↑ ↑ ↑ ↑  
Handlers. Jiggerers. Flat Pressers. Casters. Placers.

Unskilled Men

Slip makers. Clay Puggers. Emptiers. Scrappers. Pug Mill Men.

Handle Makers. Glaze Makers. Dippers Assistants. Bottom Knockers.

Saggarmaker Assistants. Oddmen. Kilnmen.

Unskilled Women

Finishers. Aerographers. Handle Makers. Enamellers. Dippers Assistants.

Fettlers. Spongers. Towers. Ware Cleaners. Putters Up and Takers Off.

Sorters. Wrappers. Packers. Paperers. Stampers. Burnishers.

Unskilled Youths

Mould Runners. Batters Out. Clay Carriers. Straw Boys.

Cutters. Ballers. Warehouse Assistants.

used and thereby relegating the thrower to a very limited product range. It was said of the thrower in 1905 that 'he has gradually been turned into a machine, and now the tool of steel (not the hand) is doing his work'.<sup>28</sup> Another effect of jigger and jolly use was that male pressers were restricted to work on particular, usually larger pieces of ware and women were introduced by manufacturers to do jigger and jolly work on the smaller sizes. Cup and saucer making in the 1880s was a skilled job on a par with flat-pressing. In the 1900s such work was entirely semi-skilled. In decorating, liquid gold and the aerograph reduced the level of skill required by decorators in general. Casting's introduction was a major battle. Owners fought desperately hard to label casting as unskilled since casting replaced one of the strongest craft workers, the hollow-ware presser with unskilled, often female labour. Many hollow-ware pressers, given their specialist skills, high wages and militant reputation, were forced to find labouring jobs.<sup>29</sup>

It has recently been argued that the main thrust and outcome of technological change in general, and in Britain during 1880-1920 in particular, is that the division of labour increased and was accompanied by de-skilling.<sup>30</sup> The experience of the pottery industry questions this conclusion. Whilst we would agree that the increased use of technology, described above, added new tasks to the division of labour in

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28. The Webbs Trade Union Collection, British Library of Political and Economic Science, Vol. XXIV pp. 353-354. F. Parkin, 'Autobiography of a Trade Unionist (n.d. Manuscript H.B. Library) p.17. W. Barratt-Greare, Hanley TUC 1905, p.68.

29. P. Gazette, 1 September, 1908, p.1066.- It was alleged that only five firms employed the highly skilled groundlayer in decorating in 1908. Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science (Economics Section) on Pottery, in P. Gazette, 1915, p.1107 and 1 September 1922, p.1223.

30. E. Hobsbawm, Industry and Empire, p.174. A.L. Levine, 'Industrial Change and its Effects upon Labour, 1900-1914', unpublished Ph.D. London, 1954, p.208. J. Brown, From Radicalism to Socialism. Paisley Engineers 1890-1920, Our History, Pamphlet 71 (n.d.) p.8. Landes, op.cit., p.317. M. Berg (ed.), Technology and Toil, p.13.

most potbanks, new machinery also simplified the occupation range. For example, casting collapsed four functions into one operation. Also, to portray the process of technological change as universally de-skilling in its effects is simply not true for pottery. Many of the skilled strata of the workforce were untouched by new machinery or methods: of those that were affected some still retained either a large measure of real hand skill or succeeded in maintaining their skilled status. Indeed in some cases the technical advance by using semi-automatic machinery was marginal. The maker could still provide a flexibility which accommodated variations in materials and temperature, a flexibility no machine could match.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, there is no a priori reason why increased mechanisation should necessarily involve further sub-division or decline of skill. New technology may enhance certain manual or skilled operations, lead to a higher quality product and worker status or require more sophisticated knowledge and create an entirely novel skilled job.<sup>32</sup> Also, as we have argued, new technology and task content are the outcome of worker/management relations which varies greatly with the relative power of each side. Therefore, our investigation of the social relations of the potbank must be guided by an awareness of the fluid, changing status of workers in this period, as their skill was enhanced or eroded. Also, the movement of workers both up and down the skill hierarchy will be shown to have had important consequences for union composition, internal relations and policy.

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31. Machin, op.cit., p.77 for the continuity of objective, technical skills among the potters.

32. More, op.cit., p.183. R. Samuel, 'Workshop of the World', History Workshop, No. 3, Spring 1977, pp. 9-11. J. Rowe, Wages in Practice and Theory (1928) p.90.

The third major element of the division of labour in pottery arises from its organisation. We have noted how the division of labour is in part a product of a social process: that management and workers both seek to define, organise and control the nature of tasks. In the pottery industry workers had a large influence on the detailed forms of work via sub-employment. Sub-employment was as old as the industry. Employers or merchants in the 18th century contracted work with individual craft potters, who then brought their own work groups to the factory to produce a 'count' of ware. As factories became the permanent location of production the total division of labour was organised around sub-employment and continued to be so down to the 1900s.<sup>33</sup> Inside the slip house, for example, the head slipman and pugman paid a group of scrappers, emptiers and labourers. In the potting shops, pressers sub-employed fettlers, towers, batters and ballers and clay carriers. The saggarmakers had their own bottom-knockers and frame-fillers. Firemen and head placers ran the ovens on a gang system. The printer and transferrer's team is a perfect example. The printer was paid by the owner to produce printed ware. The printer then sub-employed a team. He paid a transferrer; the transferrer paid a cutter; both printer and transferrer made up the wages for an assistant. The dipping house and the cratemaking and packing sheds also relied on the employment of worker by worker.<sup>34</sup>

Sub-employment in the pottery industry is therefore a major corrective to any simple notion of direct control and organisation of work by employers. This form of work organisation was also a major

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33. H. Schloss, Methods of Industrial Remuneration (1907 3rd ed.) p.197. For the use of sub-employment in the nineteenth century pottery industry see R. Whipp, 'Women Potters of Staffordshire', p.24.

34. CATU COLL. L82, Earthenware. Pressers and Attendants Agreement March 1919. L.84, 1920 Saggarmakers Agreement. Contract placing, NEC mins, 18 March, 1918. L.450 letter from dipper at Wood & Sons. Yeaman, op.cit., p.208. P. Gazette, 1 August, 1913, p.947.



influence on the social relations between workers in the industry. Though sub-employment remained a dominant feature in our period it was not left unchanged as manufacturers sought to win more direct control of the detailed form of work.<sup>35</sup> Sub-employment therefore became a focus for conflict among workers and between certain groups of labour and management.

## 2.2 Workshop Custom and Practice.

Labour historians have traditionally attached great significance to the main work practices of an industry in order to comprehend the principal aims of union policy. Recently, more time has been devoted to analysing the meaning and wider social relevance of such customs.<sup>36</sup> Customary behaviour in the workplace can tell us much about the human relationships which surround work. Custom and practice is often an indication of how workers make sense of a bewildering or problem-filled activity: via customs they could influence and regulate the nature of parts of their daily toil. Montgomery shows how work practices are often 'group-enforced codes of ethical behaviour on the job'.<sup>37</sup> This notion of custom has implications for our method. In order to discover how all types of potter, not just the dominant groups, governed their working lives we must be prepared to delve deeply into not only the workshop but also the tiny workgroups of the unskilled in order to reveal the range of customary forms.<sup>38</sup> Custom and practice is therefore a crucial part of our explanation of how the potter organised and experienced work.

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35. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1922, p.606. CATU COLL. D47, 'file 7' on 'Printers & Transferrers'. Werner & D. Wilson, Lighting in Factories and Workshops (N.C.P.I. April 1923, Hanley).

36. D. Montgomery, Workers' Control in America. Studies in the History of Work, Technology and Labour Struggles (Cambridge, 1979) and his 'Workers Control of Machine Production', Labor History, Vol. 17, Fall, No. 4, pp. 485-509. D. Brody, Steelworkers in America (Cambridge, 1960) for an excellent discussion of the 'group consciousness' and loyalty of immigrant workers.

37. Montgomery (1979), p.113.

38. Cf: Price, Masters, Unions and Men, p.11.

The richness of workshop custom in the pottery industry is readily apparent. Each occupation, and most of all, each work group, generated its own commonly accepted working methods and rules. Potters consciously decided how they were to organise their work and legitimised their behaviour by reference to notions of accepted practice with 19th century antecedents.<sup>39</sup> Outside observers found in 1912 that 'old customs and methods are difficult to displace ... The tenacity with which many persons still hold to this idea in spite of the evidence of scientific potters and others is really surprising'.<sup>40</sup> They would not have been so surprised if they knew the sound reasons for those customs. Work sharing is an example. Given the irregular production flow orders would slow up in the pressing shop. Commonly, the pressers would meet and decide on how the work would be divided among themselves, each worker or team being given a stint (or stent) of articles to produce. Even during high demand it was noticeable how 'the equalisation of work between one team and another is arranged by the men'. Trade customs or 'usages' as they were called included the appointment of senior workers to monitor the weekly 'counts'; the allowance and balance practices and also the privilege of a second firing to 'make good' a worker's apparently defective piece. Management were not allowed to retain a piece of spoilt ware (it might be sold as a second without the worker's knowledge); instead it was smashed as 'shard'. In comparison with other industries factory inspectors thought the potbanks as 'places by themselves, with hardly any supervision ... the ordinary discipline of a factory or machine shop is not brought to bear upon them'.<sup>41</sup>

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39. F. Thistlethwaite, 'The Atlantic Migration of the Pottery Industry', Economic History Review, 2nd Series, Vol. XI, No. 2, 1958, p.274. H. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society, p.38. N.S.P.W., Reconstruction, p.3. Interview with L. Sillitoe on good-for-oven.

40. H.M.I. Factories Report, 1912, p.46.

41. Interview with E. Ellis. CATU COLL, L369 letter of decorator's shop, Grindley's, 4 April 1914 and L730, J. Lovatt to Outram & Co, 23 May 1913. HMI factories Redgrave, evidence to the Departmental Committee on the Truck Acts, 1906, Report, p.778. See also, Schloss, op.cit. p.83 and G.D.H. Cole, Organised Labour (1954) p.123 for customary forms in other industries.

As management sought to increase control of the industrial process a reformation or destruction of shopfloor custom was considered necessary. Much of the turbulence in industrial relations of this period centres precisely on worker opposition to what they saw as unfair changes in work practices. Some workers never accepted that management had the right to change them. For instance, Arthur Hollins had to tell an arbiter in 1917 that 'with regard to the flattening of foot bottles, the pressers [in one firm's potting shop] maintain that it is not a question for the Arbiter as to whether a portion of the work should be given to another branch of the trade, as it is a violation of the trade privileges'.<sup>42</sup> In addition workers also attempted to alter customs which had been constructed under different or outdated working conditions. Management derived certain cost advantages from these, such as good-from-oven or the allowance system and fought to retain them.<sup>43</sup>

Perhaps two of the best examples of the centrality of custom to the potter's work experience lay in the area of apprenticeship and the internal labour market. Apprenticeship could be a formal indenture or simply the accepted method of informal induction into work. The strength of such a practice is shown in 1912 during the coal strike when William Audley was laid off by the owner. The throwers in his shop confronted the owner with the words: 'Mr. Audley is an indentured apprentice and the custom here is such an apprentice must be constantly employed or get his wages'.<sup>44</sup> Apprenticeships were common since they fulfilled three main functions: to regulate wages, to train and socialise the young potter and to maintain the skill hierarchy.

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42. CATU COLL L532, A. Hollins to Mr. Bird, 27 September, 1917.

43. HMI Factories Report, *ibid.* More, Skill and the Working Class, pp. 41 & 45. CATU COLL, L86 (n.d. April 1920?) for engravers, turners, modellers seven year indentures. S. Clowes, 1924 Wage Inquiry, pT. For the numbers of apprentices (although neither of the reports state their definition): 1911 Census, General Report (Cd. 8491 (1917), p.166 and BPMF Census, February, 1922, p.1. See also S. & B. Webb, Industrial Democracy (1902, 1913 ed.), pp. 454 and 489.

44. CATU COLL, L427, W. McGurk to J. Lovatt, 16 August, 1913.

Apprentices or 'assistants' wages were calculated in relation to journeymen's wage rates. Ad hoc committees of journeymen potters met to decide on an apprentice's rate for new pieces of ware which arrived in the shops and they also monitored the apprentice's five year progression to 'served' status. Apart from receiving technical training the youth also absorbed the language and lore of the potbank, the argot and the badges of status.<sup>45</sup>

These two main functions of apprenticeship, wage regulation and socialisation together helped perpetuate the hierarchy of skill. Therefore apprentices were limited to learning one trade and their number in any one shop fixed by a ratio of usually 4:1 against journeymen.<sup>46</sup> Apprenticeship customs were also a good example of how workers and management contested work practices and how they should change. Casting was introduced by some companies without related apprentice regulations. During the high rate of change in technology and practices during the war, apprenticeships were temporarily abandoned only to be bitterly fought over as workers attempted to re-establish the custom in the post-war period. The failure of the National Council to erect formal industrial training schemes in the 1920s can be explained by its inability to root the schemes in workshop practice.<sup>47</sup>

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45. In loc.cit., L187, apprenticeship agreement between Bullera Ltd., Taylor Tunnicliffe and NSPW, 25 October, 1929 and L86 for a packer's scheme of 1920.

46. P. Gazette, 1 November, 1922, p.1712. For the lack of formal technical education see NCPI Second Report on the Appropriate Education in the Pottery Industry, 1919. Ratio see CATU COLL, L569, J. Booth and J. Poole agreement 3 March, 1912 and L430, J. Mattock to J. Lovatt, 23 April, 1914. P. Gazette, 1 January, 1907, p.92; 1 January, 1909, p.55 and 1 September, 1914, p.1057. See also T. Hareven and R. Langenbach, Amoskeag. Life and Work in an American Factory City (1979), p.118 for the relevance of formal and informal training methods to people's entry and induction to work.

47. CATU COLL, L206, 'notes on Messrs. Doultons Ltd. 3.5.23'; L560, F. Jackson to union, 30 May, 1913, regarding managerial attempts to collapse job ladder and L382, the case of Albert Aucock and E. Belcher fight to gain journeyman status, 6 July, 1914. NCPI wages Committee, 11 June, 1919 and NCPI mins, Appendix B, Rules for the Regulation of Apprenticeships in the Pottery Industry, (1922), p.605.

On the other hand the union's vigorous defence of apprenticeship can only be appreciated when we realise that apprenticeship was an integral part of workshop custom and organisation.<sup>48</sup>

The internal labour market of a potbank shows how a set of working practices was the product of both worker and management attempts to determine customary forms. Workers did not drift between jobs or factories but generally progressed through accepted career sequences. Companies found it useful to distinguish between their key workers and those of more marginal use. For workers, notions of social justice or the defence of skill were uppermost in their minds. All the departments of a potbank had well-known patterns of career progression. In the potting shops a lad might begin as a clay-carrier, then be accepted for an apprenticeship and eventually become a journeyman making the smaller ware. As competence increased the young presser would move up to the larger, more difficult ware sizes. Eventually he could become the head presser with responsibility for the shop's general operation and its relation with the press shop and 'green house'.<sup>49</sup> Similar occupational progressions occurred in the firing and dipping departments. Older craftsmen thought that this system not only distinguished between skilled levels but was also a sensible way of organising and structuring work to reflect age and experience. William Callear reflected in 1911 that dipping was 'systematised like placing ... the natural flow for the upkeep of the staff at the ovens came through the dipping house, odd work, wad squeezing and so on'.<sup>50</sup>

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48. For apprenticeship and its customary forms in other industries see E.H. Phelps-Brown, The Growth of British Industrial Relations, A Study from the Standpoint of 1906-1914 (1959), p.58. C. Black, Sweated Industry and the Minimum Wage (1907) p.147. On the concept of the internal labour market see, M. Reich, D. Gordon, R. Edwards, 'A Theory of Labour Market Segmentation', American Economic Review, Vol. 63, No. 2, May 1973, pp. 359-65.

49. W. Fishley-Holland, Fifty Years a Potter, p.31. 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, Manufacturers objections, p.3. CATU COLL, L174, Agreement of Sanitary Operatives and Manufacturers, 28 May, 1909.

50. W. Callear, 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.45.

With experience a few workers could hope to become foremen or in the larger works 'departmental managers'. A prize for head placers, firemen or very senior workers was to be put 'on the staff' where job tenure was more secure. In a world of daily or weekly pay, irregular employment and income, to become one of the staff was a considerable gain. George Burton, for example, entered Cauldon's as a warehouse assistant progressing subsequently to warehouseman, head warehouseman, head of ordering and then to the office where he finally attained the position of confidential clerk.<sup>51</sup> Clearly it was impossible for all or even a majority of workers to follow such a path. The important effect of the custom was symbolic; many potters could aspire to staff status as management realised. This added to the fragmentation of the division of labour in the potbank, a set of social divisions which could often counteract the forces which generated group or collective activity. Workers who were put on the staff routinely left the union. In some cases individual workers' support for unionism waned since their father or a close relative had become a member of staff and now 'spoke for them'.<sup>52</sup>

A significant outcome of the internal labour market of pottery firms was that many potters, especially the more skilled, remained in one company for most of their career. Variations in production technique coupled with the prevalence of traditional job progressions made movement between potbanks or trades difficult. A report in 1926 required for examination 'workers who had only been at one occupation and in particular those who had only been in one branch of the industry'. The investigators found 18,000 who satisfied that condition.<sup>53</sup> Longevity of attachment to one firm was an outstanding

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51. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1907, p.929. CATU COLL, L103, letter of Mr. Jenkins 30 April, 1929. For an example of a similar phenomenon in the car industry see L. Holden, 'Industrial Relations at Vauxhall's, 1920-1950', Oral History, Vol. 9, No. 2, Autumn 1981, p.22.

52. T. Cuthbert to NEC Mins. 22 September, 1917. NSPW Collector's survey of 1924, Area 12, C. Micklin.

53. Report on the Incidence of Silicosis in the Pottery Industry, by S. Sutherland and S. Bryson (1926) 'Selection of Workers for Examination'.

trait of many potters' work experience. At Gibsons in 1905, 20% of the workforce had been employed there for over ten years. The personal testimony of potters also testifies to the almost permanent connection with an occupation and a company. Mrs. Freally of Fenton was employed for 25 years by Radfords. Large companies such as Wedgwoods were noted for the length of attachment between them and their workers. As we shall see, manufacturers attempted to make use of this phenomenon in their strategies of control. Also the relations workers experienced with union officials and management was clearly influenced by the nature of individual potters' working careers. Union activists and managers, in different ways, were faced with attitudes and values which were the product often of years of effort invested in their particular trade or firm.<sup>54</sup>

We would argue that custom was an essential ingredient of the potters' work experience and consciousness. Custom and practice was a means of rationalising and regulating work. The values implicit in these shopfloor codes influenced not only how workshop or occupational groups related to each other, inside a potbank or across the industry, but also how potters viewed other social groups in the community. It has been shown that a wide range of customs existed, that the customs involved were malleable, and subject to differing use. Therefore, the potters' union gave both an expression of the dominant customs and values of the workshop in its policy, yet at the same time proved to be an arena for the competing interpretation of custom and practice made by the highly fragmented workforce.

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54. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1907, p.343; 1 March, 1908, p.349; 1 May, pp. 573 and 580, 1910; 1 March, 1913, p.312 and 1 January, 1916, p.68.

### 2.3 Wages

We examine wages in the pottery industry separately for three reasons. Firstly, because the wage contract has been shown to be the worker's most direct experience of the relationship between capital and labour. A person's wage is so often a worker's highest concern.<sup>55</sup> Secondly, Marx, the Webbs and Blackburn all note how the productivity of labour is remunerated on an individual basis; that the labour contract is not an exchange of equivalents and that via the extraction of surplus value from labour, the labour contract is the prime mechanism of labour's exploitation by capital.<sup>56</sup> However, it will be argued that the individual worker does not necessarily experience the labour contract in isolation.<sup>57</sup> Potters will be shown to have been aware of many related features of this contract. Also, the precise form of the labour or wage contract clearly varied according to the nature of the industry and even the firm involved. Therefore we will try to reconstruct not only the conditions of the wage contract in pottery but also the industry's wage structure, how it was constructed and how it changed. Thirdly, as Cole or Rowe pointed out, the forms of wage payment can reveal much about the organisation of work in an industry. Wages systems are often the embodiment of the social relations which arise from work.<sup>58</sup>

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55. M. Mann, Consciousness and Action among the Western Working Class (1973), p.32 on 'wage consciousness'.

56. K. Marx, Capital, Vol. 1 (from 3rd German edition, ed. F. Engels. Trans. S. Moore & E. Aveling 1938), pp. 391-392. S. & B. Webb, Problems of Modern Industry (1902), p.x. R. Blackburn, as quoted in R. Hyman, Strikes (1972), p.91.

57. W. Brown, Piecework Bargaining (1973) p.157. G.D.H. Cole, Organised Labour, p.5.

58. On the inter-relationship between wages and work organisation see T. Lupton (ed.), Payment Systems (Harmondsworth, 1972) pp. 8-10.



Most industries' wage systems were complex but in the case of pottery a particularly large set of variables influenced the final form.<sup>59</sup> The effect of the industry's wealth of custom has already been suggested. Why E. Burton's wages could vary from 8s. 4d. to £1. 2s. 8d. in one month or how two flat pressers in 1913 could receive wages differing by 15s. for the same work<sup>60</sup> is basically due to our main variables. The piece-rate system; the variation in mechanical operation; the influence of the allowance custom and the fluctuations of employment associated with pottery manufacture. In terms of the potters' work experience, the wage system intensified the fragmentation of the workforce and its consciousness.

The piece-rate system was capable, as elsewhere, of producing infinite variations of pay. Each potter or workgroup was paid for each article of unit of work. It was paid on an individual or workshop basis so theoretically you could end up with as many different prices as there were articles and workers. If we take the price paid for pressing a five inch earthenware plate in 1920, for the 82 firms producing that plate we find a range of payment from 1s. 3d. to 2s. 3d. The unit of measurement was a 'dozen', which could vary widely. The gilders at Myotts had counts (i.e. the number of pieces in a dozen was your 'count') of 4, 6, 8, 12, 15, 18 and 24.<sup>61</sup> Each workshop evolved its own counts with each new piece of ware.<sup>62</sup> Mechanical or working conditions and the range of worker competence effected efficiency.

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59. J. Rowe, Wages in Practice and Theory, pp. 10-12. CATU COLL, the throwers' price list alone produced 39 pages with 40 prices per page. Letter of H. Clay to S. Clowes, 14 February, 1928.

60. CATU COLL, L195, E. Burton's wages 1921; D22, Winkle's flat pressers wages, June - December, 1913.

61. G.D.H. Cole, The Payment of Wages (1918) pp. 5 - 9. CATU COLL, D47 'Counts and Price Ledgers', No. 3.

62. In loc. cit., L176, 9 sanitary firms 27" x 20" piece of ware varied in price from 1s. 10d. to 2s. 6d. See L567, decorators; L568 packers; L441 warehouse; L744 oven and D47 Printers and Transferrers.

Clay quality for makers, size and age of ovens and kilns for ovenmen, fuel quality for firemen, the atmospheric conditions for printers and decorators and glaze qualities for dippers were all critical determinants of potters' wages. One young potter was amazed at the proficiency of an older turner (who 'almost did it in his sleep') and a thrower whose touch was so developed 'that he reached 120 pots an hour'. Some management tried to rationalise the production process by removing workers' responsibility for mechanical and working conditions; others were happy to let workers bear these costs.<sup>63</sup>

Many wage figures quoted for pottery are really gross wages. Net figures are what potters took home and resulted from the many deductions and 'allowances' which had grown up with each craft or job. In the craftsman's wage contract the manufacturer had supplied heat, light and machinery which the craftsman then 'allowed' so much per piece price in order to pay back the employer. The tradition remained and many manufacturers extended the practice to less skilled workers.<sup>64</sup> Lily Ash, a lithographer at Pearl Pottery wrote 'I worked 3 days, 25 hours for 13s. 5d. The money I had to draw when stoppages were off was 10s. 11d.' In 1920 out of 53 firms 61.35% made 'deductions' on their wages. 'Good-from-oven' was a notorious way of reducing wage costs and bitterly resented by workers who had no control over the firing process.<sup>65</sup> During January 1912, two flat pressers at Myotts lost payment for 150 dozen of heavy flat'. One worker remembered how she cried as a young woman when defective ware was returned to her after firing and no

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63. In loc.cit., L545, A. Hollins to Mr. Tunnicliffe on defects of clay leading to cracked ware; D49, Oven File, 1919, covering 17 firms on the effects of bad fuel. L74, Thomas Watkins to J. Lovatt, 30 October, 1913 on cramped placing conditions as a variable. Fishley Holland, Fifty Years, pp. 7 & 9.

64. Truck Acts Report, pp. 42 & 98. HMI Factories Report, 1909, p.55. CATU COLL, L. Ash to Mrs. Walleth.

65. CATU COLL, L288, letter of Wileman & Co., 5 November, 1915 for stoppage list. D43, NSW Saucer Making Price Inquiry, of 33 firms almost 75% made deductions across 9 areas.

Table 8b

Wage Structure of the Pottery Industry for 1924

Source: 1924 Wage Inquiry, Accountant's Report, Wage Tables.

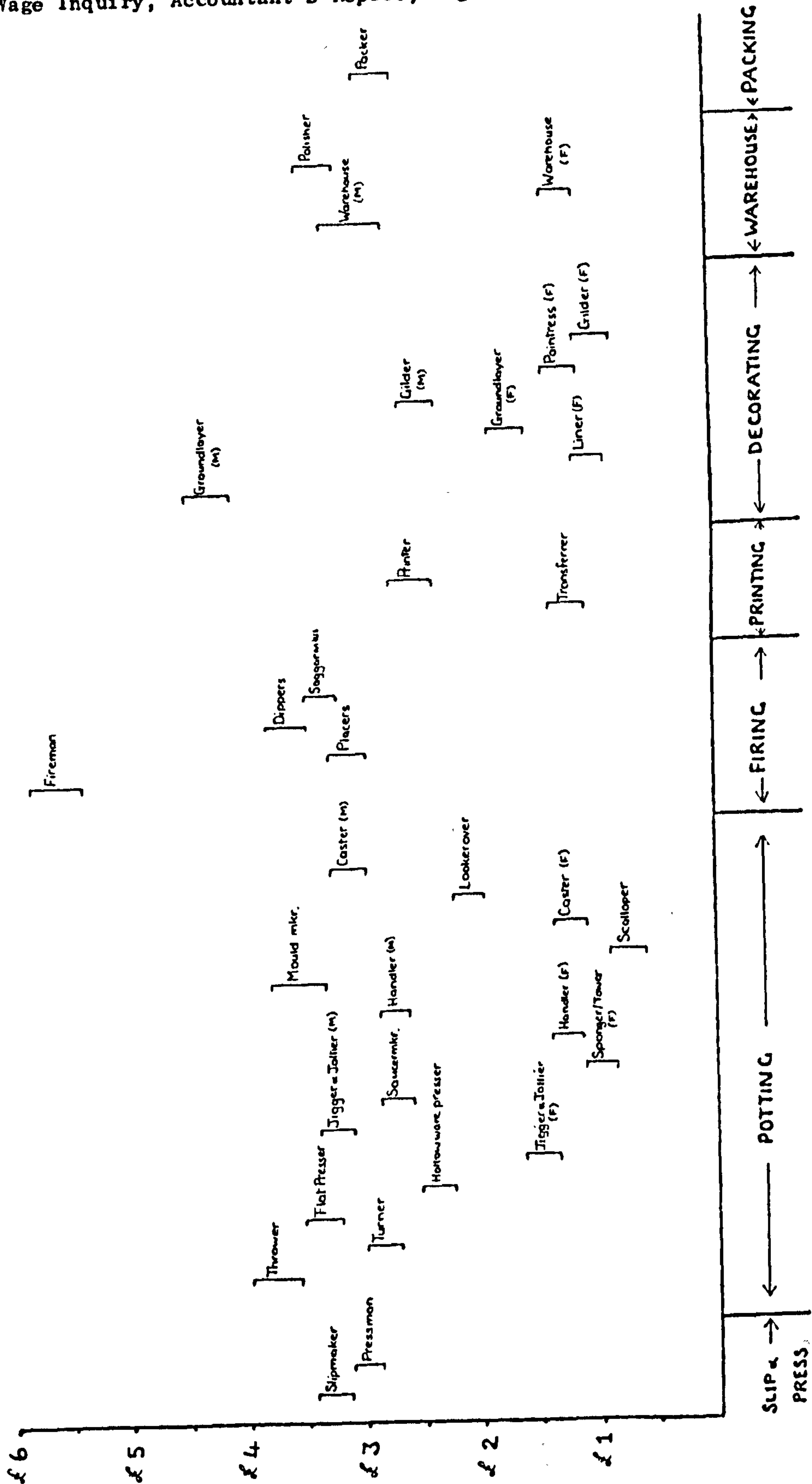
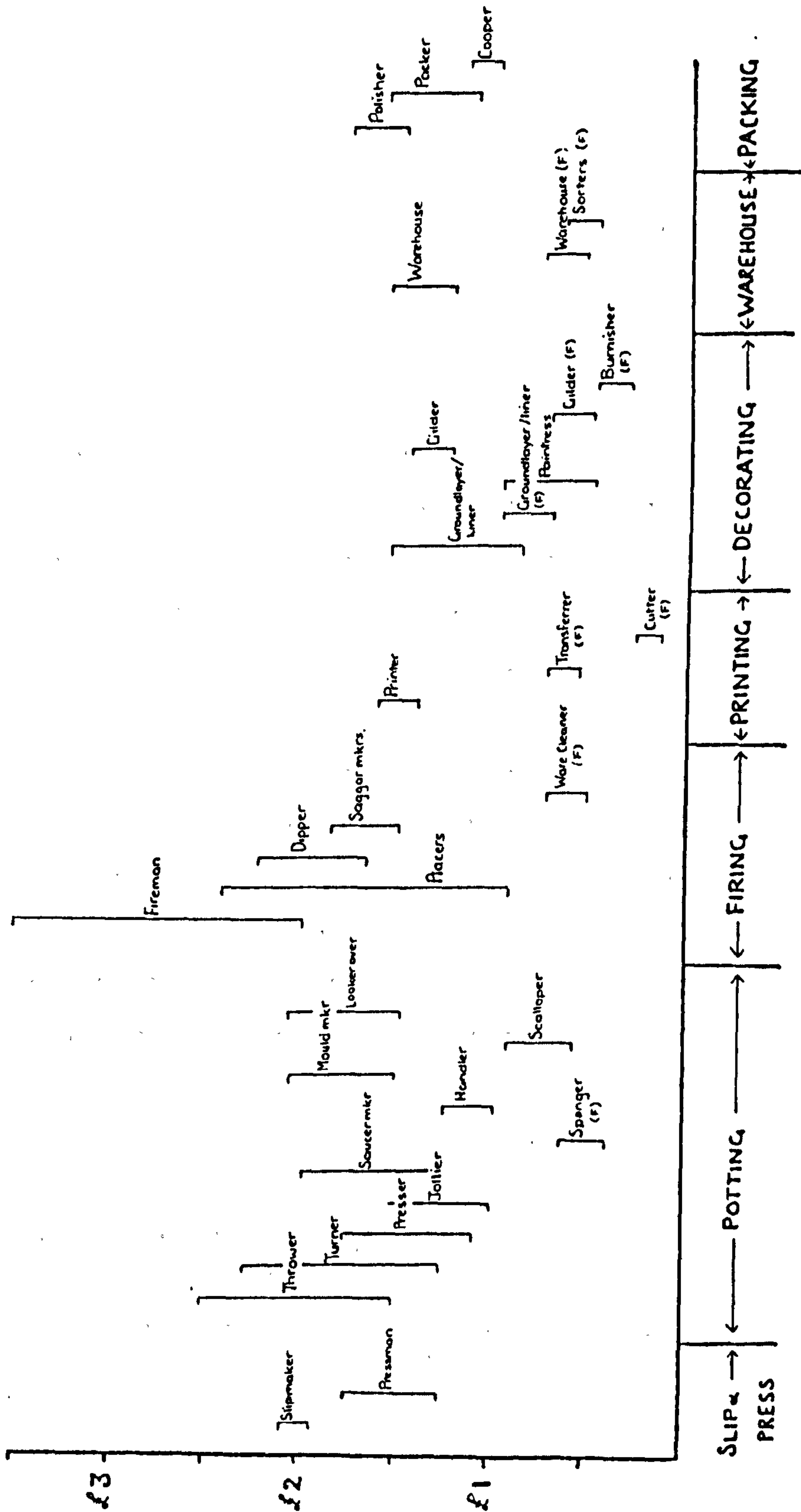


Table 8a

Wage Structure of the Pottery Industry for 1906

Source: A. Steel-Maitland & R.E. Squire, Report to Royal Commission on the Poor Laws and Relief of Distress (1909), Appendix Vol. XLIV, pp. 371 (251) - 373 (253).



wages paid. These deductions became a cause celebre of the union.<sup>66</sup>

Finally, seasonal demand affected earnings as did the malfunction of the industrial process as the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws' detailed study of pottery wages revealed.<sup>67</sup>

Reconstructing a wage structure for an individual firm is possible (see Appendix 3); the difficulties of recreating one for the whole industry are immense. The main problem lies in the differences between the sub-industries. Jet and rockingham rates were recognised as the lowest. The high levels of machinery and female labour also depressed electrical and chemical rates. China's wage levels were erratic in response to its changing market performance. Within earthenware the range of earnings within one occupation across the sub-industry was very large. By contrast sanitary work was universally known for its exceptionally high wage levels.<sup>68</sup>

However, if one takes cross sections of the sub-industries at different dates a broad wage hierarchy does emerge. The combined wage determinants of skill, custom and the power relations between employer and worker, or their results are outlined in Table 8. At the top of the wage hierarchy were the firemen, a perfect example of the correlation of skill and a pivotal position within the division of labour, codified by custom. Every technical manual admits that 'of the many processes connected with the ceramic industry, that of firing is the most important'. The entire output of the potbank was in the hands of the fireman during the two or three day firing. Many firemen were so important to the production process

66. In *Loc.cit.*, L543, agreement of Myott's and their transferrers, 11 May, 1914. L318, example of union action to abolish stoppages at Wild Bros, 29 July, 1914.

67. P. Gazette, 1 December 1908, p.1450. Royal Commission on the Poor Law and Relief of Distress, 1908, App. xvi, Report of Steel-Maitland and Squire, pp. 371-373. NSPW, NEC mins., 8 July, 1920 and 27 July, 1915.

68. Royal Comm. Poor Law, *ibid.* NSPW, NEC mins., 31 August, 1916. Sam Clowes' Scrap Book, cutting from P. Gazette, 1907, p.598. P. Cunliffe-Lister, Hansard, 1927, Col. 611. NSPW Reconstruction, p.17.

that their wages were guaranteed 'work or play'.<sup>69</sup> It is not possible to say that any department of the production sequence clearly dominated in wage terms, although pressing and firing do seem to have enjoyed generally higher levels. The existence of wage hierarchies within departments is the most distinctive feature. For example in dipping the wage ranking descends from the dippers through to the placers, saggarmakers, ware cleaners and finally the assistants.<sup>70</sup>

One startlingly clear aspect of the potters' wage rankings is the way it closely expresses the sexual division of labour in the pottery industry. In Table 8, in 1906, there are almost two separate male and female wage scales. Note how the highly paid paintresses or female ground-layers only just overlap with the lowly paid male assistants around the 18s. line. As the field notes of Dora Mycock, a union organiser, confirm women were paid half to two-thirds of male workers, even if women were performing the same task as men.<sup>71</sup> As Hunt has shown, 'women's wages were determined, in large part, by considerations of what most people believed they ought to earn and this was usually measured as a customary proportion of the male rate'.<sup>72</sup> Also, we may observe how the female wage scale displays the wide range of skill among women workers. Women potters too progressed up skill, career and wage ladders which sharply differentiated the mass of female employees. At the summit were the highly skilled transferrers and paintresses

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69. E. Bourry, Treatise on Ceramic Industries, p.178. Binns, Manual of Practical Potting, p.151. 'Play' in this sense means no work available.

70. P. Gazette, 1 October, 1908, p.1187, Verbatim Report of Moon Arbitration. CATU COLL, L31, makers' wage proposal 1920; L544, Minton's Printers and Transferrers Price List. 1924 Wage Inquiry, Section C, p.38, banders and liners wages. See also Turner, Trade Union Structure, pp. 130 & 141. Rowe, Wages, pp. 42-45 and R. Gray, The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh (Oxford, 1976) pp. 46-49, 55, 73 & 81, for wage hierarchies elsewhere.

71. CATU COLL, L28, Dora Mycock field notes for 1908. P. Gazette, 1 October 1915, p.1102.

72. E. Hunt, Regional Wage Variations in Britain 1850-1914 (1973) pp. 115 & 341.

(15 - 20s. per week). Below them were the semi-skilled workers, such as handlers, sprayers and sorters (10 - 15s. per week) and at the base came the unskilled cleaners and assistants (2 - 10s. per week).<sup>73</sup>

The general wage structure of the pottery industry appears to have remained remarkably stable. Notwithstanding the overall rise in money wages during the period 1906 to 1924 the relative position between departments and most occupations was mostly unchanged. As has been found in engineering at this time, the potters' wage hierarchy and differentials experienced no major alteration.<sup>74</sup> What is noteworthy is the smaller wage range within each occupation (see Table 8) in 1924 compared to 1906; a result of the greater standardisation of tasks and bargaining which the industry experienced. Other detailed changes were in the wage levels of the hollow-ware presser, the turner, the gilder (downwards) and the introduction of the caster at a much lower level than the presser he replaced. A concealed change occurred among the throwers, printers and male ground-layers. These appear to be still high wage earners in 1924 yet their ranks were diminished in numbers. Note also the shift of women workers into a number of skilled male jobs such as printing, placing and even pressing. Each of these detailed changes bear out our earlier conclusions regarding the shifts in the division of labour and the potters' skill hierarchy and were also amply reflected in the union's policy changes and organisation transformation.

Finally, there were many attempts to analyse the general level of wages in the pottery industry at this time by external investigators: they all appeared to disagree.<sup>75</sup> Table 9, based on the most detailed and systematic

73. See Table 8.

74. Rowe, Wages, p.106. Hunt, op.cit., pp. 345-346. Compare the wage structure of pottery in: Report of the Board of Trade on Earnings and Hours, 1906, pp. 101-109; Royal Comm. Poor Law, App. xvi, pp. 159 (105)-160 (106). US Report 1915, p.429, and 1924 Wage Inquiry, Accountants Report, Table 'Whole Industry'.

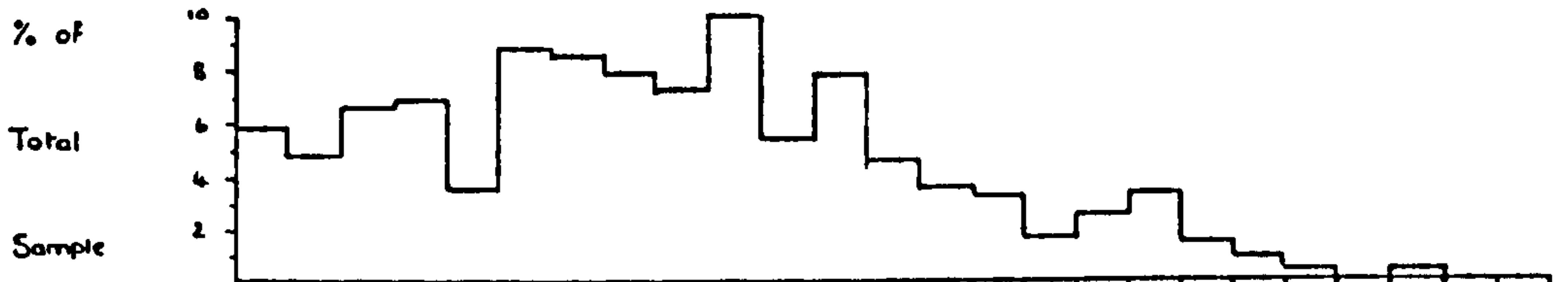
75. Sunday Chronicle in P. Gazette, 1 September, 1906, p.1047. S. Advertiser 12 September, 1905. Cost of Living of the Working Classes. Report of an Enquiry by the Board of Trade (1908), Cd. 3864, p.216.

Table 9

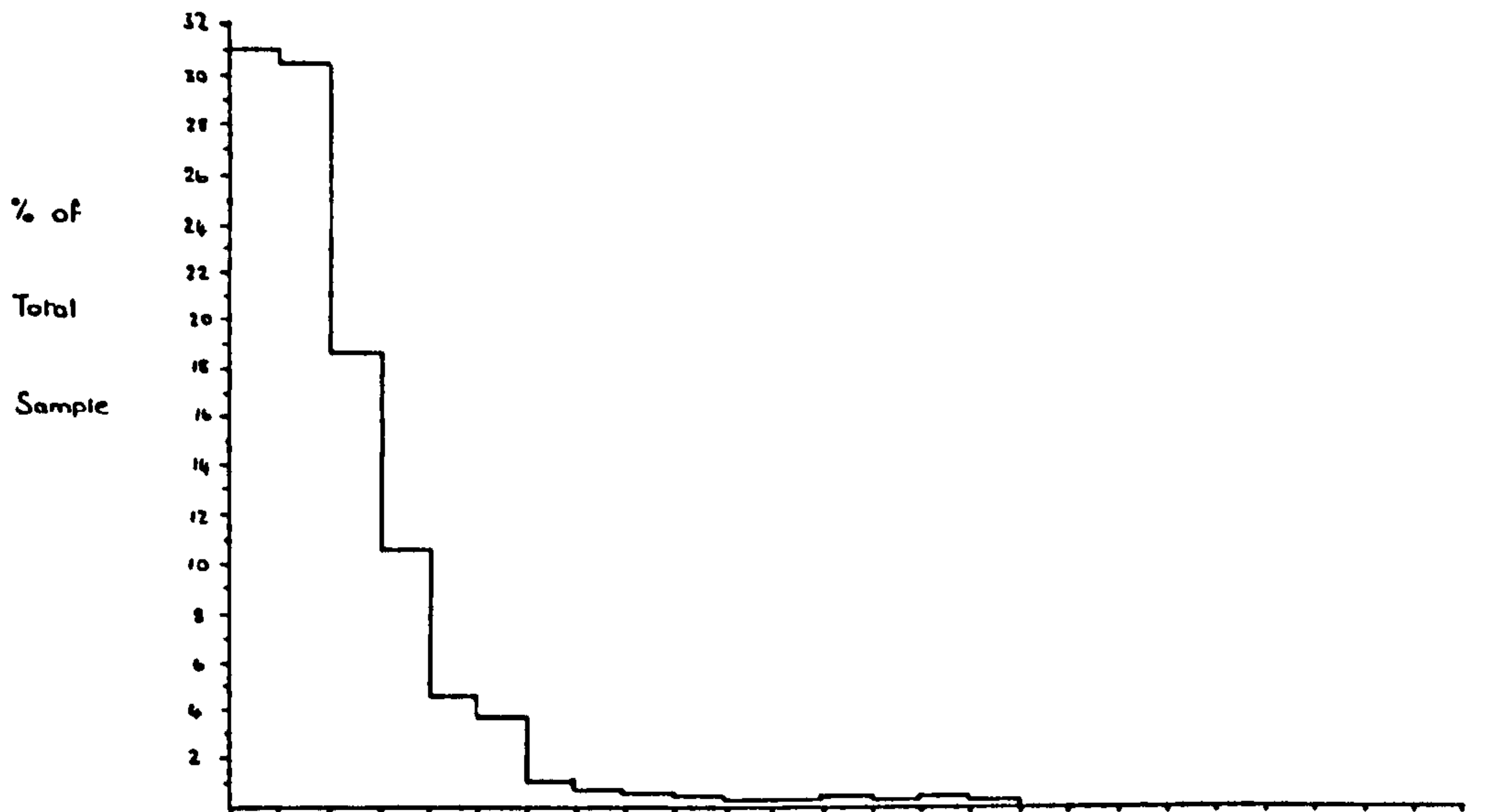
Wage Distribution in the Pottery Industry 1924

Source: 1924 Wage Inquiry, Accountant's Report, Wage Tables.

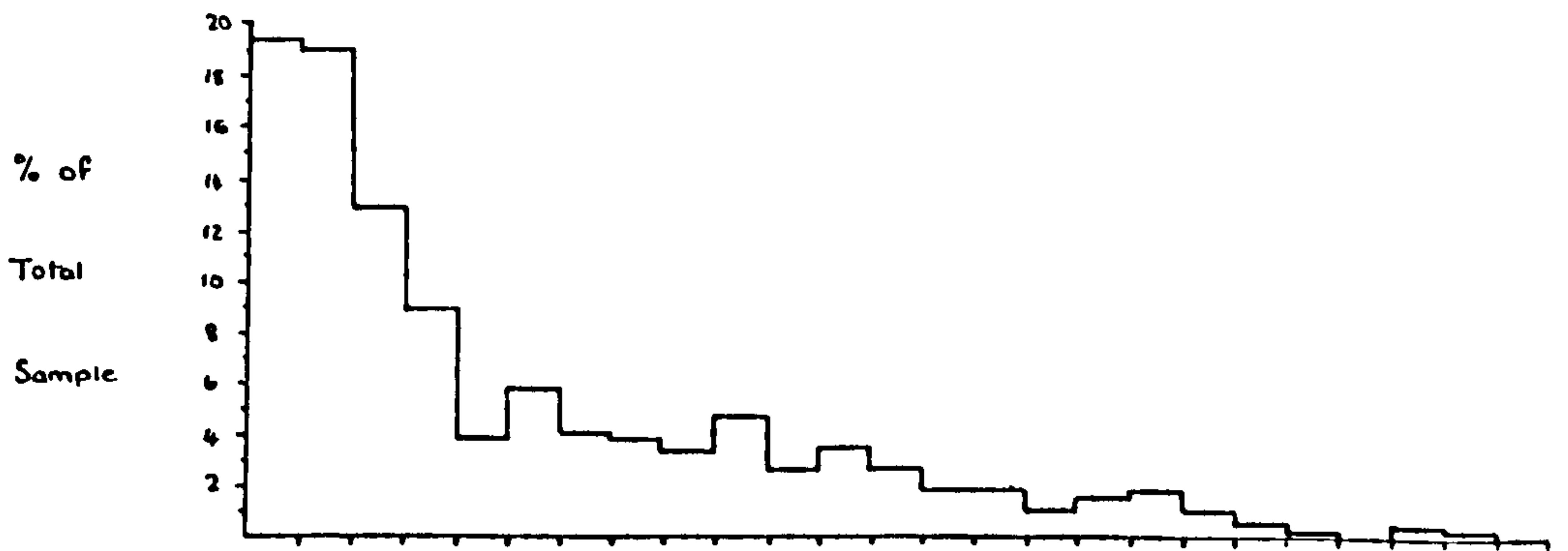
Wages of Men : Whole Industry for week ending 29<sup>th</sup> March 1924.



Wages of Women : Whole Industry for week ending 29<sup>th</sup> March 1924.



Wages of Men and Women : Whole Industry week ending 29<sup>th</sup> March 1924.



Up to £1-0-0  
 £1-0-1 to £1-5-0  
 £1-5-1 to £1-10-0  
 £1-10-1 to £1-15-0  
 £1-15-1 to £2-0-0  
 £2-0-1 to £2-5-0  
 £2-5-1 to £2-10-0  
 £2-10-1 to £2-15-0  
 £2-15-1 to £3-0-0  
 £3-0-1 to £3-5-0  
 £3-5-1 to £3-10-0  
 £3-10-1 to £3-15-0  
 £3-15-1 to £4-0-0  
 £4-0-1 to £4-5-0  
 £4-5-1 to £4-10-0  
 £4-10-1 to £4-15-0  
 £4-15-1 to £5-0-0  
 £5-0-1 to £6-0-0  
 £6-0-1 to £7-0-0  
 £7-0-1 to £8-0-0  
 £8-0-1 to £9-0-0  
 £9-0-1 to £10-0-0  
 £10-0-1 to £11-0-0  
 £11-0-1 to £12-0-0  
 Over £12-0-0



survey available indicates not only the wide range of payment among the potters but also the distribution of occupational wage levels across the industry. It is therefore meaningless to talk of pottery as a high or low wage industry. Instead, let us compare the potters with other sectors of national industry at a number of levels. The lowest paid pottery workers (male and female assistants, labourers and women casual workers) were by any industry's standards very poorly paid. In the early 1920s potters' labourers would have needed rises of 38.8% in order to match the wage rates of building labourers. The minimum rates of the women boot and shoe workers were 131.5% greater than female pottery decorators' apprentices, 95.45% greater than warehouse women and 86.3% higher than electrical fitters, dippers and cleaners.<sup>76</sup> Using the average wage levels, the 1906 wage census shows that nationally the average male earned 28s. 6d. to 29s. 6d. while the potters' average was 31s. 3d. The average potter was apparently quite close to the average engineering and building worker yet much better placed than clothing or textiles or rail workers. The average weekly wage for women potters of 11.5s. did not compare well with the national average of between 13 - 14s. However, the male sanitary pressers, throwers and firemen were among some of the highest paid workers in the country.<sup>77</sup>

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76. 1924 Wage Inquiry, Appendix 3.

77. For a comparison of female wages in pottery and other industries see: J.J. Mallon in B.L. Hutchins, Women in Modern Industry (1915), pp.213-231. For male wage comparison cf. Report of Board of Trade on Earnings, *ibid.* with H. Clegg, A. Fox, A. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions Since 1889, Vol. 1 1889-1910 (1964), pp. 479-483. For an indication of pottery wage levels in comparison with other industries see G. Routh, Occupation and Pay in Great Britain 1906-60 (Cambridge, 1965) pp. 86, 90, 92, 94 & 96. F. Botham, 'Wages and the Cost of Living in North Staffordshire,' mimeo L.S.E., Tables 6.1-7.5, shows that real wage rates were falling 1900-1908 and gradually rising to 1914. The 1924 Wage Inquiry, Accountant's Report, p.28 and the Labour Gazette Supplement, Feb., 1925 suggest that between 1914-1924 potters' wages kept pace with inflation to 1920 and thereafter did not fall as fast as prices.

The wage system of the pottery industry raises a number of points in relation to our analysis of work and trade unionism. Pottery's general division of labour and skill hierarchy seems to have been reflected in and reinforced by the wage structure. In addition, the wage scale gave expression to the wide variation in male and female pay thereby underlining the sexual division of labour. The wage scale also covered a wide range and large number of highly differentiated occupational wage levels. This range and differentiation of wages was first, a key contributor to the variety of status and lifestyles among the potters; second, it was of great relevance to the social relations of the industry. Lastly, the absence of radical change in the wage pattern provided the main context for the union's structure and policies. On the other hand, the detailed movements of occupational wage status proved to be an invaluable aid to the growth and change in the union's membership and social composition.

#### 2.4 The Social Relations of the Workplace.

This section will try to display and account for the social relations which operated in both the pottery industry as a whole and within individual potbanks. The social relationships between employers and workers as well as those experienced among workers will be studied. We have outlined the principal contextual features which directly influenced the social relations which arose from work, namely the industrial process and the division of labour, the prevailing work customs and the wage structure. Here the aim is to highlight how these features inter-wove and affected the form of social relations. At the same time we are particularly concerned to discover what these contextual features meant for worker or managerial behaviour and how these characteristics were perceived, interpreted and acted upon by potters of differing social

backgrounds. Moreover, social relations are not conceived here as neutral; rather, that they also involved questions of power and authority.<sup>78</sup> This analysis of the social relations of the potter's workplace necessarily focuses sharply on the nature of the control of work.

The hallmark of social relations among the pottery workers was a separatism which arose from the nature of pottery manufacture. Each of the sub-industries, given their product quality, location and workforce composition varied markedly in their social status. Compare the sanitary workers' boast of not being 'bound by custom of the general trade' with the lowly public image of the china workers of 'neck-end' (central Longton).<sup>79</sup> Wedgwood's or Doulton's labour was of higher social rank than the 'penny jack shops's employees. The piece-rate system and sub-employment helped produce a highly stratified workforce. Piece work was competitive, often leading to divisions of interest between workers. Sub-employment led to antipathy inside departments. A dipper's assistant complained about the behaviour of his employer, the head dipper at Wood & Sons, in December 1919 to the union thus: 'don't you think the head Dipper can pay more wages out than this, he gets the money right enough by the Oven ... its a shame don't you think but when you look into it don't come to me individually because if we ask for a rise we get the sack'.<sup>80</sup>

Not only was there a wide range of jobs with each occupation, paid differently and encrusted with differing habits or custom, but workers had contrasting appearances and work-styles. The skilled workers were

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78. Gray, op.cit., p.32. S. Parker et.al., Sociology of Industry, p.93.

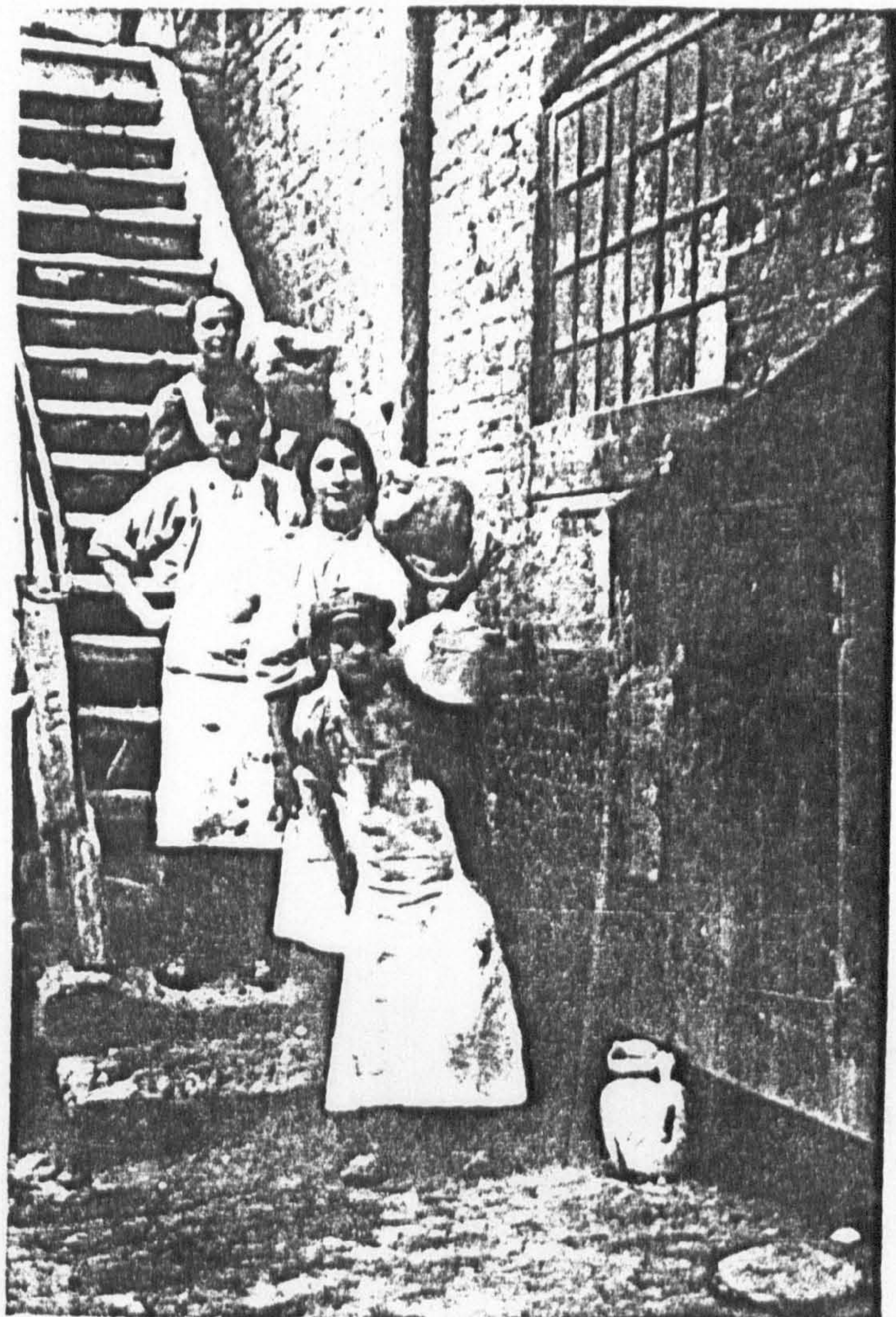
79. Sam Clowes Scrap Book, cutting Staffordshire Sentinel, 17 April 1907 and N. Parkes, 14 March, 1901.

80. CATU COLL, L450, letter headed 13.12.19. Burslem and L550, J. Burton to Heuman, 15.2.20. H.M.I. Factories Report, 1913, p.50.

Picture 2.

Appearance on the  
Potbank

a. Clay carriers.



b. Dish maker.

c. Mould makers.



d. Paintresses.



especially conscious of their public job definition and image. William Machin, a craftsman, commented on the pug and slip house's poor reputation in these terms: 'You generally find that the person working a pug has more muscle than other things'.<sup>81</sup> The mould-runner, stoker or cutter for example could never compare in status with the fireman, thrower or presser. Charles Shaw emphasised this gulf in 1903 when he wrote:

There was a deep and wide division between one class of workmen on a potbank and another. The plate-maker, slip-makers and some odd branches were regarded as a lower caste than hollow-ware pressers, throwers, turners and printers ... [they] differed so widely in sentiment and habit ... you might have taken one to be the employer of the other.<sup>82</sup>

Sylvia Pankhurst depicted the contrasting work environment and styles of dress in her 1907 series of paintings.<sup>83</sup> Contemporary photographs convey the distinctions of social status as expressed in work-clothes. Graham's 1908 series<sup>84</sup> is an excellent example. Note the different appearance (see Picture 2) of the young, grubby clay carriers from the neat, smart look of the dish maker and the assertive stance of the mould maker. Arnold Bennett distinguished the paintresses from other women potters, with their long black dresses and lace pinafores, dubbing them 'the noblesse of the bank'. The labels 'rough' and 'respectable' were clearly used on the potbanks.<sup>85</sup> The phenomenon of social stratification and separatism among workers was not unique to pottery manufacture. In 1906 a group of writers advised leaders that 'rigid class distinctions permeate

81. A. Hollin, Improperly Pugged Clay, pp. 20 & 22.

82. C. Shaw, When I Was a Child, by an old potter (1903) pp. 193-194.

83. R. Pankhurst, Sylvia Pankhurst Artist and Crusader (1979) pp. 80-87 - Plate VIII and the original paintings and sketches (in private possession of R. Pankhurst). C. Shaw, *ibid.*

84. M. Graham, Cup and Saucer Land, pp. 24 & 28. H.M.I. Factories Report, 1904, p.266. Gladstone Pottery Museum Photographic Collection, P/1977/26 and P/1977/447.

85. A. Bennett, Anna of the Five Towns (1902) p.120. On the meaning of respectability at work see W.M. Walker, Juteopolis. Dundee and its Textile Workers 1885-1923 (Edinburgh 1979) p.4.

the rank and file of manual workers. These distinctions are familiar to most social workers, but those who speak generally of the "working classes" or "the poor" can have no conception of their influence or their extent'.<sup>86</sup> Our contention is that the degree of social fragmentation among the potters was particularly high.

There were two further important outcomes of the potters' highly stratified social relations. Workers' reactions to their experience of the production process bred a highly developed sense of work group consciousness. Within the array of tasks and occupations the individual potter looked to his team or gang, the primary workgroup, in order to gain definition of status. The words and actions of pottery workers in our period continually betray their workgroup or sectional preoccupations. The polishers of Keeling and Co. spent most of January 1920 fighting for changes in their team's work regime.<sup>87</sup> Divisions of interest developed between workgroups due to piece work. Job Wilcox told of the friction between slip-maker and presser. Pressers quarrelled notoriously with slipmen since 'the slip is given to us, and if we do not get good ware [i.e. if the slip is poor] it is invariably thrown at us'.<sup>88</sup> Similar antagonisms existed between saggar-makers and placers, firing and making, making and decorating: in other words all the main departments conflicted with each other over ware defects and lost payment. Workgroup independence was strong, which made factory-wide organisations unstable. The works'

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86. E. Cadbury, M. Matheson, G. Shann, Women's Work and Wages (1906), p.47. H. Owen, The Staffordshire Potter (1901) p.343. C. Walker, Steeltown (New York 1950) p.72. R. Harrison (ed.), Independent Collier, pp. 6-12. A. Exell, 'Morris Motors in the 1930s', History Workshop, Issue 6, Autumn 1978, p.61.

87. L. Weatherill, 'Was there really a great divide in the social history of work in the industrial revolution?', paper delivered to Social History Conference, Winchester, 3 Jan., 1981 for importance of pottery work groups in 18th century. Staffordshire Sentinel, 11 October, 1920, Situations Vacant. CATU COLL, L401, Doulton's to Mrs. Lawton 20 March, 1914.

88. Paper discussed at NCPI, faults in alkaline slip casting, 7 October 1925, p.21.

committee of W.H. Grindley was aborted in 1919 after the glost placers failed to bury their differences with other workers and 'refused to have anything to do with the scheme'.<sup>89</sup>

The workgroup was not just a product of the pattern of basic tasks. Given the high degrees of permanence of employment in a company many workgroups developed customs and continuities which augmented their social cohesion. A woman potter remembered that in her pressing shop each Friday the members of her team paid 1d each for a 'cake session' held while the departmental manager checked the weekly count. Local health visitors and philanthropists recoiled at the routine presence of 'footings' and 'jollifications' in almost every workshop'.<sup>90</sup> The family composition gave many workgroups their strength (see section 2.5). For instance, Edwin Tomkinson and his father were members of a turning team and backed each other when John Sadler tried to force Edwin to turn extra ware outside of his customary job description.<sup>91</sup> Owners were tolerant of workgroup identity because it made sense and money. Workgroup sub-employment lifted the burden of detailed management of production off the shoulders of the owner while stable workgroups developed greater collective efficiency. Conversely, some owners became wary of these groups. The workgroup was primarily a defensive formation but when necessary, if its strategic position allowed, it could become a combative force in the bargaining system of a potbank.

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89. CATU COLL, L417, D. Cornwall to S. Clowes, 7 May, 1919 and D35 Melling Pottery (n.d.), firemen, head dipper and pressman 'on staff'. P. Gazette, 1 September, 1914, p.1081.

90. Interview with E. Groutt. M. Garnett, evidence to Inter-Departmental C<sup>ee</sup> on Physical Deterioration, Report (1904), Q9087. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1910, p.1105.

91. CATU COLL, L69, J. Sadler to J. Lovatt, 20 January 1914 and L747, Mr. Greenfield to Lovatt, 2 April, 1914.



The second distinctive aspect of the fragmented social relations which surrounded work in the pottery industry related to gender. The relations between men and women potters were not simply characterised by mutual enmity or empathy. Historians have mainly portrayed general gender relations at this time in terms of subordinate female and dominant male roles.<sup>92</sup> While the pottery workers in many respects confirm this view, the differing perceptions and actions of individual potters seriously qualifies the dominant/subordinate model. Apparently a fairly clear divide existed between men and women's work. The accepted custom on most 'banks was that a broad demarcation should exist between male and female work as it had done for most of the previous century. Only during and after the Great War did women increase their numbers in the semi-skilled occupations. As the 1922 British Pottery Manufacturers Census shows (see Table 6) women workers were still concentrated in the latter part of the production process: in the decorating, warehouse and packing departments which were popularly seen as containing the more intricate, delicate and less prestigious tasks. Where women did work in the firing or potting shops they were usually the unskilled assistants to male skilled potters.<sup>93</sup>

A combination of factors contributed to the subordinate position of most women potters. Firstly, male potters continued to explain the job demarcation by pointing out that women were physically incapable of the heavy and dangerous work involved in dipping and placing for example. Tradition dictated that male workers, as the chief wage earners in a

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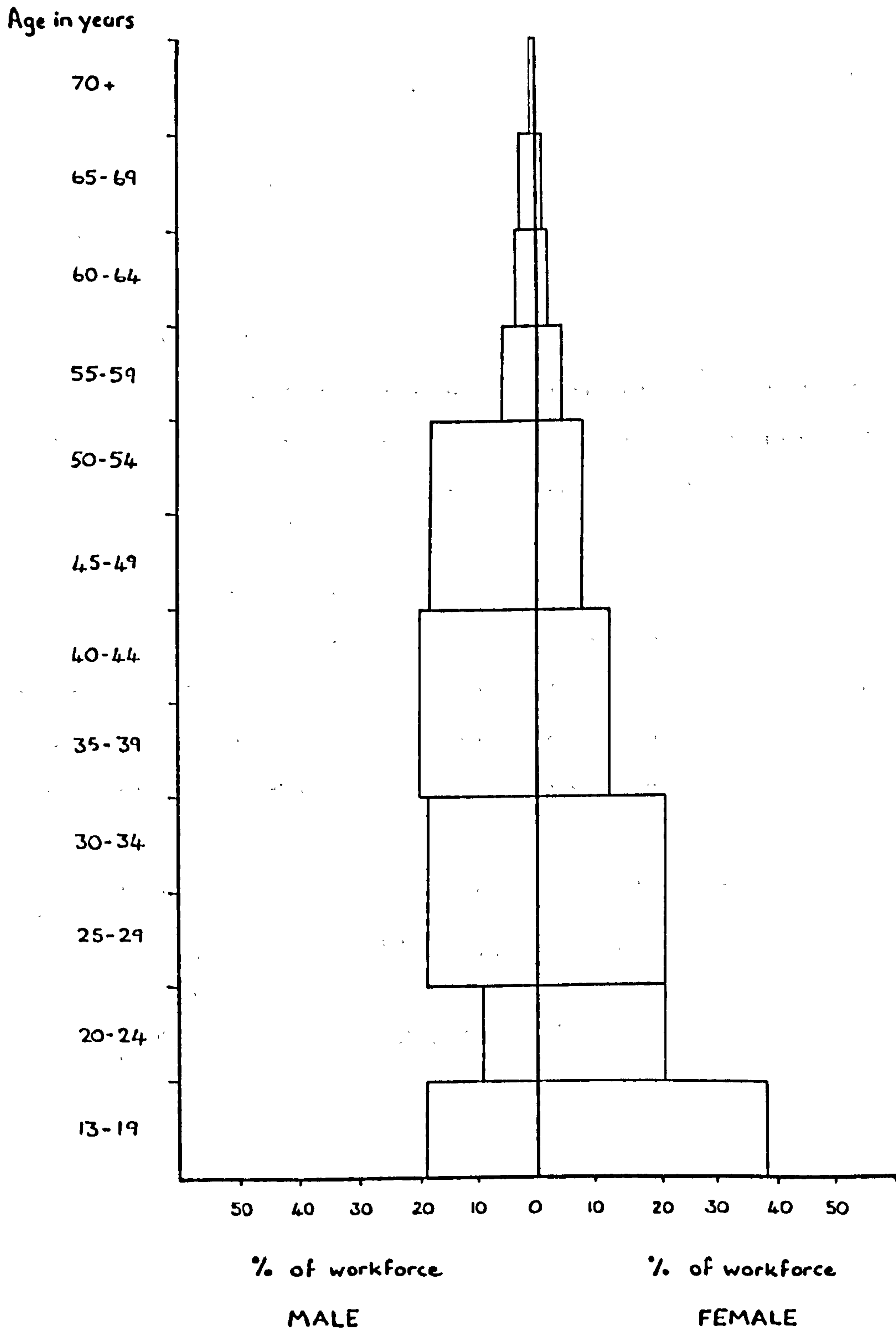
92. See for example, B. Drake, Women in Trade Unions (n.d.) p.41 or P. Stearns, 'Working Class Women in Britain 1890-1914' in M. Vicinus, Suffer and Be Still. Women in the Victorian Age (1972) pp. 100-115, esp. p.111 for the supposedly 'passive' woman worker.

93. R. Whipp, 'Women Pottery Workers', pp. 23-24. 1924 Wage Inquiry, App. 7. Report of the War Cabinet C<sup>ee</sup> on Women in Industry (1919) Cmd. 135, p.59ff.

Table 10

Age Pyramid of the Pottery Workforce 1921

Source: Staffordshire Census, 1921, Table 18, pp. 93-96.



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household, should retain the higher paid skilled work. An observer in 1902 discovered how for the male potter 'his wife and family were his help in the work'.<sup>94</sup> We have already noted the low wage levels of women relative to men. Secondly, custom also ensured that women in the same shop or department as men, seldom earned more than a man. Mrs. Ellis was forced in 1912 to cease work by her male tile-maker colleagues since her dexterity led her to earn more than them.<sup>95</sup> Thirdly, in the light of the oversupply of local female labour, and women occupying predominantly unskilled jobs, many women were regarded as replaceable. Indeed women earned amongst some men a reputation as impermanent participants in work. In 1911, Miss Sadler, H.M.I. was struck by 'the remarkable mobility of women's labour' in the industry. Of 762 women in 68 potbanks she found that 258 had left in the space of nine months.<sup>96</sup> Unfortunately for skilled and more permanent women workers the prevailing image of the woman potter was of a young (see Table 10), unskilled, low paid, and quite marginal worker.<sup>97</sup>

The subordinate position of female potters can be made clearer by some examples of workshop relations. The arguments around the custom of good-from-oven demonstrate the predicament of the disadvantaged female. As the abuse flew when ware was returned to a shop damaged after firing, women workers, unless they had someone to defend them, were often the

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94. 1924 Wage Inquiry, S. Clowes, p.27, Mrs. Wallet, p.19s. Morning Leader, 11 December, 1902.

95. Interview with E. Ellis. C<sup>ee</sup> on Women in Industry (1919) p.121.

96. H.M.I. Factories Report, 1911, p.145.

97. Departmental C<sup>ee</sup> on the use of Lead in the Manufacture of Earthenware and China, Mins. of Evidence, Qs. 6527-31, 3994-5 and 6518.

recipients of blame. Some women we know gave as good as they received yet the conclusion of a factory inspector was that: 'the unfortunate person who is generally supposed to be responsible for it [spoilt ware] is the female' because 'she has the least protection, I suppose, of the others in works; the men can defend themselves'.<sup>98</sup> Sub-employment could exemplify the role of the woman potter and the force of male authority. A tower explained how she had to carry whatever her sub-employer directed. When asked if she informed the manager of the heavy weights involved she replied: 'No, I never have. For one reason, if I was to mention it perhaps I should do myself an injury'. Harry Johnson of the famous pottery firm (who knew a thing or two about subordination) wryly observed how workmen benefitted from sub-contract. In the competitive environment created by piece-work some men did not go out of their way to help women workers. Other male potters were simply inconsiderate towards women. As one majolica paintress put it: 'No, it is not nice for the girls to take their meals in the same room as some of the men you get in a pottery'.<sup>99</sup>

Not all women by any means fitted the subordinate image. As some men privately recognised there was such competition for certain semi-skilled women's jobs that 'if a man did not treat his attendant properly she would leave him to go to another man' and 'in many cases husband and wife or child worked together'.<sup>100</sup> Not only were women increasingly employed apart from male worker-employers in this period, but during the years 1914-1920 there was a 'self-confidence engendered in women by

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98. Truck Act Report 1906, p.714.

99. 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup>, Qs. 8697, 11654 & 11787. HMI Factories Report 1906, pp. 236 & 243 & 1907, p.198.

100. C. Collet, Royal Commission on Labour, The Employment of Women, The Staffordshire Potteries, 1893, p.63, witness 398.

the very considerable proportion of cases where they are efficiently doing men's work', coupled with higher relative wage levels.<sup>101</sup> As we shall see, women could also exert strong influence at work via their role in family or kin based workgroups and connections. Without doubt the potters' union personified the dominant male influence on the social relations at work. At the same time, in the first three decades of this century, male superiority did not go unchallenged in either potbank bargaining or any of the other forms of union action.

In order to give a full explanation of the social relations inside the pottery industry it is necessary to discover how work was controlled. The work customs, piece-rate and sub-employment systems have told us a great deal about the horizontal control in the industry: how workers sought to control work in relation to other workers. Here we shall concentrate on the nature of vertical control: how workers as distinct from management attempted to win control of the production process. Vertical control operated at a number of levels. These levels ranged from the detailed terms of employment right up to decisions about investment or the location of production. There is a great difference between the control of work and autonomous or discretionary regulation of work. The former involves the complete authority and direction of all the production process whereas autonomous regulation is more limited, implying the regulation by a worker or group of the details of their own tasks. In general there exists a very fluid and imprecise borderline between workshop autonomy and managerial authority. The contexts in which workers attempt to establish their regulation of work are vital in determining the strength of their control vis-a-vis management.<sup>102</sup>

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101. CATU COLL L587, from file 'Joint C<sup>ee</sup> on Placers', 18 Jan., 1916. HMI Factories Report, 1916, p.166.

102. C. Goodrich, The Frontier of Control (1920, 1975 ed.) p.xxi. Montgomery, Workers' Control in America, pp. 104 & 140ff. K. Coates & T. Topham, Workers' Control (1968), p.358.

There existed a strong tradition from the 18th century of potters' self-regulation of work. In 1874 the Workman's Examiner described how flat-pressers 'engage and discharge all their own attendants, and the employer as a rule does not dictate to them'.<sup>103</sup> Many individuals or groups of potters, especially the craftsmen, exercised forms of self-regulation of work in our period. A pottery manager affirmed the strength of autonomous regulation. He wrote:

The recorded job breakdowns show that much of the responsibility for the production of ware is disseminated throughout the factory. The authority to take action; to set up a machine and to correct faults, is possessed by the journeyman as a craftsman's right which has not been given to him by delegation from the management. The right was his from the start ... there was always this preponderance of contracted labour which took its own responsibility once it had been directed to perform a given production task.<sup>104</sup>

This regulation of work was the basis of the skilled potter's pride in his job. The throwers and turners of Taylor Tunnicliff's objected to the company introducing a new piece of ware since it was of inferior quality and beneath their dignity to make. Carter Goodrich's seminal study of control in 1920 relies heavily on the pottery industry for examples of discretionary regulation of work by operatives.<sup>105</sup> What better indication of a worker's control over his job than his ability to determine his working hours. There were very few clocks in most potbanks. As Robert Stirrat explained 'we have no set time for stopping and starting here'.<sup>106</sup>

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103. The Workman's Examiner, 19 December, 1874.

104. Machin, Economics of Technical Change, p.179.

105. CATU COLL, D45, Dispute between Messrs Taylor Tunnicliff & Co. and their Operations, 1908, p.1. Goodrich, *ibid.*, pp. 37-39, 98, 109, 131 & 155.

106. CATU COLL, L492, R. Colclough, 26 April, 1931. L523, R. Stirrat, 1920.

A bi-product of the levels of skill and discretion enjoyed by many potters was the relative absence of alienation. Alienation occurs when work is organised so that the worker is forced to suppress his or her individuality. If the worker cannot relate his work to a goal, if the work is merely performed through routine, the production process may be said to exist as something alien for the operative.<sup>107</sup> Admittedly many unskilled potters did feel powerless and derived little meaning from their labour, but not so the skilled and even semi-skilled. Henry Evans, a ground-layer at Cauldon's, like many potters, was genuinely proud of his 'famous productions' (including a set for Queen Victoria). Potters spoke freely of the gratifying experience of forming 'ugly looking shapeless lumps of clay into beautiful vessels'. J.B. Priestley's description of the skilled potter in 1933 catches this quality of pottery work. 'This sound element of craft, in which they can, and do, take a personal pride, removes all these men from the ordinary ranks of modern workmen. They are not merely doing a job', on the contrary 'these men - and no doubt many of the women too - become more themselves, enlarge their personalities'.<sup>108</sup> In terms of industrial relations fulfillment in work did not preclude conflict arising between masters and workers. Potters were more ambivalent. Absence of alienation might lessen the tendency for disputes yet alternatively the fierce craft pride of the potter could easily have the opposite effect.

Two qualifications of the picture of autonomous regulation of work by potters must be made. Firstly, regarding the overall control of the

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107. Gutman, op.cit., p.36. J. Hinton, The First Shop Stewards' Movement (1973) p.96. More, op.cit., p.22.

108. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1913, p.454. Claxton, In the Potteries, p.17. Priestly, op.cit., pp. 204 and 211.

work process, even the most skilled potters or workgroups had a small degree of authority. The total arrangement of the production facilities or major investment decisions were never within the control of craftsmen. Secondly, although managerial control of the total or detailed elements of production was well-known to be loose, with few foremen or supervisory workers employed on potbanks in 1900, owners did tighten their control during this period. By 1925 the numbers of departmental managers and foremen had increased enough for the union officials to complain that they saw far too little of the manufacturers in the works and rather too much of the 'jacket-men'.<sup>109</sup> The accompaniment to increased numbers of supervisors was the introduction of clocking-in and other forms of regulation aimed at developing real managerial control of work. The first qualification helps explain why even the most powerful craftsmen looked to union forms of organisation to protect and maintain their customary rights of control.<sup>110</sup> The second provides us with the source of much of the potters' individual and collective anger throughout our period.

### Conclusion

In this section it has been argued that the potter's experience of work and their social relations was the result of an interaction between their own, independent orientations to work and the technological and organisational features of the industry. The analysis of work has centred on the workshop, the typical location for most potters' experience of work: the workgroup has been recognised as the basic social unit of work.

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109. NCPI paper discussed: Alkaline Casting Slips, 1925, p.29. A. Hollins. Many of the larger firms had managers of departments by 1911, for example, P. Gazette, 1 February 1908, p.186 or CATU COLL, L376, Grindley's 3 Jan., 1911. See also, J. Melling, 'Non-Commissioned Officers: British Employers and their Supervisory workers 1880-1920', Social History, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1980, pp. 183-221.

110. R. Pankhurst, Sylvia Pankhurst, in loc.cit.



We have studied the potter and his workgroup in relation to four main contexts: the production process; the forms of custom and practice; the payment system and the social relations of work. It was discovered that while the relations within the workgroup were generally cohesive, the relationship between the hierarchically ordered workgroups was competitive and often antagonistic. As was said at the time, the disposition of the different occupations was to 'gang their ain gait'.<sup>111</sup>

The production process was finely sub-divided, lacked continuity of flow and involved a high number of specific occupations. Changes that occurred in the production process were localised and the experience of job redesign and de-skilling was limited to a relatively small number of occupational groups. Contrary to recent assertions, de-skilling was not the dominant, general experience of the workforce; some workers actually increased their skills. Within the division of labour a wide variety of tasks and skill levels were exhibited and groups were acutely conscious of their abilities and social status.<sup>112</sup> Custom and practice was a means of organising and rationalising work by the potters. Customary rules, generated by each workgroup, augmented the horizontal differentiation of the workforce while the sub-employment system along with the internal labour market enhanced the vertical separation. Piece-work payment matched the variety of occupations with a range of levels of remuneration. The

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111. J. Foster Fraser, 'The Tragedy of the Potteries' in Life's Contrasts (1908), pp. 141-155

112. Cf. H. Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital (1974).

competitive environment of piece-work compounded the sectionalism of the potters.<sup>113</sup> Traditional values regarding the role of women workers split the workforce along gender lines.

A conscious attempt has been made to study the mass of the workforce, skilled and unskilled.<sup>114</sup> This focus has revealed the natural and continuing heterogeneity of the potters. As has been argued elsewhere,<sup>115</sup> the labour aristocracy may be a useful device for researching certain industries. In the pottery industry such a concept is not appropriate in the period in question. On the contrary, the distinctive feature of the potters was the plurality of hierarchies, divisions and competing groups in each department of the production process and within each sub-industry. Furthermore, the instability of piece-rates, the market fluctuations and the changes in skill and status precluded the maintenance of a dominant strata of workers with the aristocratic credentials required by certain historians.<sup>116</sup>

Lastly, we began this section by suggesting that an analysis of work would form a first step towards a study of trade unionism. In this respect a number of features of pottery work deserve highlighting. Although the operation of the production process and wage contract evoked conflict between worker and owner, thereby forming the classic basis for collective organisation, participation in the production process

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113. M. Jones, Potbank (1961) pp. 128-129 and 157.

114. See also P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics. The Culture of the Factory in later Victorian England (Hassocks 1980) pp. xiv and 52.

115. For a review of the literature on the labour aristocracy see H.F. Moorhouse, 'The Marxist theory of the labour aristocracy', Social History, Vol. 3, No. 1, January, 1978, pp. 61-82.

116. E. Hobsbawm, Labouring Men, pp. 272-315.

also provided the basis for friction and contests among workers. The sectionalism evident on the potbank alone meant that erecting the common normative framework which gave an industrial union its coherence would be difficult. Again, the strength and permanence of the workgroup on the shopfloor suggests that this might also be the key social unit involved in bargaining and union organisation.

## 2.5 Family, Home and Work

Historians now recognise the intersection of the two worlds of home and work. It is becoming more common 'to mesh two important specialities, labour history and the history of the family' because 'these topics embrace two of the more fundamental areas of human activity'.<sup>117</sup> Although industrialisation in Britain was accompanied by the decline of the household mode of production, and its replacement by wage labour and a family wage economy, the interdependence of family members could remain strong, especially where there was a high level of female employment.<sup>118</sup> By extending the analysis of work beyond the potbank gates, the meaning of work to the potter may become clearer.

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117. E.H. Pleck, 'Two Worlds in One', Journal of Social History, Winter 1976, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 178-189, especially 178. T. Matsumura, 'The Flint Glass Makers', p.58. E. Richards, 'Women in the British Economy', History, October, 1974, Vol. 59, pp. 337-357. M. Anderson, Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire (Cambridge 1971); by the same author, Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914 (1980), pp. 65-80 for a clear exposition of the structural constraints on family form, the flexibility of the family economy, and the role of female employment levels and social values. He notes the pattern of the family economy 'involved subtle differences between groups and industries, only a few of which have so far been fully explored'. See also Anderson's (ed.) Sociology of the Family (1980), pp. 35-36. S. Rowbotham, Hidden from History (1973), p.58. For earlier attempts to highlight the connexion between home and work see M. Hewitt, Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry (1958) or I. Pinchbeck, Victorian Working Women (1969).

118. L. Tilly and J.W. Scott, Women, Work and Family (1978) p.104.

Work in the pottery industry had an important impact on the home lives of the potters; at the same time the experience of work was deeply influenced by the attitudes and values generated within the potter's home. The intersection of home and work in the Potteries can be explored via two related routes. First, it is necessary to discover what was the link between these two areas of working class life; how was that link perceived and interpreted, and in particular, what relevance did the relationship of home and work have for gender roles?<sup>119</sup> Given that pottery manufacture was unhealthy the second question concerns the meaning given by the pottery worker to the effect of work on his or her health: we need to know how they assessed the relationship of health, home and work. Ultimately, it is hoped to demonstrate that the connexion between work and home can illuminate both the form and function of the potters' union.

Two basic features of the potters' lives quickly establish the close association between work and home: the physical proximity of the home to the workplace, and the mixing of work-routine and domestic activity. As contemporary photographs show the potbank was the predominant physical feature of the Six Towns.<sup>120</sup> The 400 'banks, individually and collectively overshadowed their employees' homes. Potters' homes were 'hemmed in by their work'. Inquests, court and press reports indicate that many operatives worked at the very least, in the town or district where they lived. Some firms built company houses. Kirkhams, for example, owned

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119. J.W. Scott and L.A. Tilley, 'Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth Century Europe' in Anderson (ed.), Sociology of the Family, pp. 153-154.

120. See Picture 3 and the photographs in P. Gazette, 1 May, 1922, p.780. S. Baring-Gould, The Frobishers (1901), p.85.

the streets of houses surrounding their London Road works in Stoke.<sup>121</sup>  
 A 1% sample of the union was taken from the records of June 1920. It was found that 89.6% of the members lived within two miles of their workplace. Of these 49.7% lived between one and two miles away and 40% resided less than a mile from where they worked. Even the large firms supplied their labour needs from the immediate surrounding areas. Most potters walked to work.<sup>122</sup>

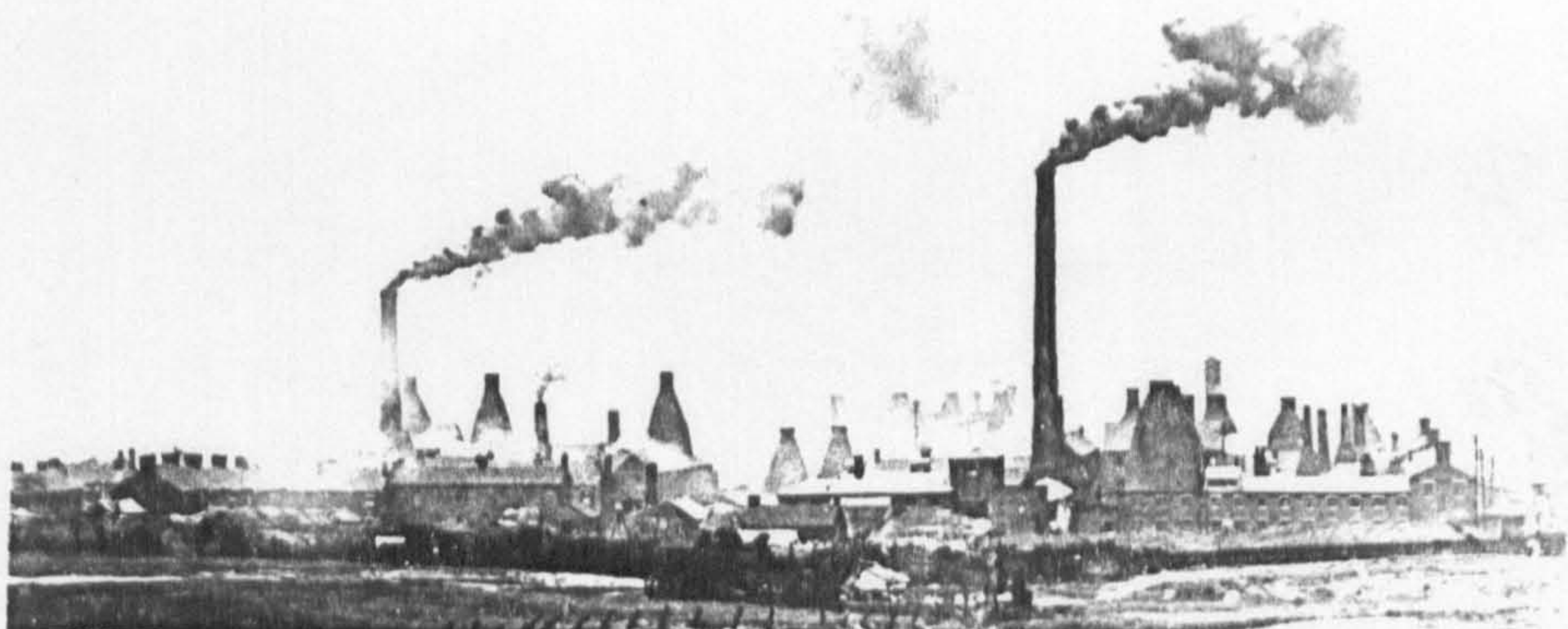
While the residential patterns of the Potteries ensured a spatial link between home and work, it was the work cycle which bound the domestic and industrial spheres so firmly. Home and work routines were synchronised. Working hours were long and irregular. Oven work was infamous for its lengthy work sessions. David Draycott, a placer, worked 'as long as two days and a night at a stretch'.<sup>123</sup> The most frequent breach of the factory regulations was for the length of potters' working days. Apparently, working from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. was common, especially when meeting deadlines or rush orders. The stoppages and deductions associated with piecework meant extra hours of labour were necessary if lost wages were to be redeemed. Work was liable to be highly irregular in its rhythms. Partly this was due to the lack of an integrated production process: on the other hand there was a tradition of self-determined work routines. Potters did not only accommodate variations

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121. The Times, 27 September, 1898, p.5. G. Tuckwell, as quoted, in P. Gazette, 1 November, 1911, p.1246. Interview with W. Bell and family. T. Montgomery, ground layer, lived and worked in the same area for 36 years. P. Gazette, 1 February, 1914, p.214.

122. CATU COLL, D10, W. Broad's Collectors Book for 1920. Distances calculated using the Ordnance Survey, North-East Staffordshire Sheet, 1900, 2nd Edition, 6 inches to a mile. Minton Manuscripts, University College of North Wales, Bangor, Vol. 1, Item 591 register of apprentices.

123. Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) Quarterly Report, October, 1900, p.2. Interview with E. Draycott, P. Gazette, 1 Dec., 1914, p.1422. For similar findings in other industries see, M. Young and P. Willmott, Family and Kinship in East London (1957) p.102; B. Jackson, Working Class Community (1968) p.89.



OLD BURSLEM A view from Tunstall c1910

COLLECTORCARD  
Croydon CRO 1HW

C1815

Picture 3. Burslem c1910.

Source: Collector card Croydon CRO 1 HW.

in production runs but also learned how to convert the irregularity to their own advantage. Workers therefore used breaks in operation to shop or attend to children and sick relatives. A stoneware employer admitted in 1911 that 'the employment is a free and easy one, and the women do not need to be constantly at work'.<sup>124</sup> It was this intermittent quality of pottery work which led Clapham to comment on how potters retained control of their time in a way usually associated with the pre-factory age. Only around the First World War did owners seek to formalise working hours and regulate attendance.<sup>125</sup>

Arguably the strongest social feature of the link between home and work was the family. It was through family and kin relations that the two worlds intersected. Family employment was as old as the industry. It was well known locally that an individual skilled potter, in the previous two centuries, 'might employ his own family', and the observation was made in 1906 how 'that is very often the case to this day'.<sup>126</sup> Successive government inquiries revealed to outsiders what potters accepted as commonplace. Collet's study in 1892 found that 'in many cases husband and wife or child work together', and the Royal Commission on the Poor Law found the situation unchanged. The family remained an

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124. HMI Factories Report, 1913, p.86. S. Sentinel, 6 April, 1907. D. Mycock evidence to Departmental C<sup>ee</sup> on the Employment of Women and Young Persons on the Two-Shift System, 1920, Cmd 1038, Q 1881. CATU COLL, L745, Keeling & Co. to J. Lovatt, 24 April, 1914. This evidence runs counter to the formal concept of work time in M.A. Bienefeld, Working Hours in British Industry. An Economic History (1972) pp. 223-226. R. Bird letter to 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, p.38.

125. Booth, Life and Labour, p.89. M. Garnett to Physical Deterioration C<sup>ee</sup>, Qs. 9024ff. J.H. Clapham, An Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. III, Machines and National Rivalries 1887-1914, p.189. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1914, p.701 and 1 May, 1920, p.664. NSPW, NEC mins, 22 June, 1915.

126. See M. Dupree, 'Family Structure and Working Conditions', unpublished D.Phil thesis, Oxford, 1981. W. Burton to Dept'l C<sup>ee</sup> on Truck Acts, pp. 42 and 98.

essential element of the work experience throughout our period and beyond. Individual families 'followed the trade' both between generations and across the family and kin network.<sup>127</sup>

In spite of the unanimity of contemporary commentators and potters, these impressions need testing. Let us take a sample of one neighbourhood in Basford in 1920.<sup>128</sup> Out of the 400 recorded pottery workers and unionists in this area the strength of family employment can be demonstrated. 191 or 47.48% of the workers were in families where other members of the family were potters. Secondly, there were 76 working families: within these family units the mean number of members per family working on the potbank was three. Figure 2 provides concrete evidence of working families. A survey of union contribution rates in 1924 across the Potteries showed that, of the completed replies, 22% of the households had other members working as potters. It would appear from records relating to the Johnsons and Howson firms that 52.52% of their sanitary workers shared the same surname. Under the entries for 'B', 10 of the 24 workers with surnames beginning with B appear related.<sup>129</sup> Therefore, we can broadly accept the potter's assertion that 'the men and women working in a [pottery] factory are often husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, fathers and daughters'.<sup>130</sup>

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127. Collet to Royal Commission on Labour, pp. 61-63. Royal Commission on the Poor Law, Vol. xvi, pp. 160-165. See also, Yeaman, 'Geographical Factors in the Pottery Industry', p.146. and NSPW Reconstruction, p.28. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1906, p.469.

128. CATU COLL, D40, see footnote 122.

129. CATU COLL, L30, 1924 survey of union members. D47, Miscellaneous Ledger marked 'Sanitary Prices Johnsons and Howsons' (n.d. 1919?) For national family size figures see Anderson, History of the Western Family p.24 (4.75 in 1900) and Census of England and Wales, 1911, Vol. XIII, Fertility of Marriage Part II (1923), Table XLVIII puts the potters at 5.76. See also Phelps-Brown, British Industrial Relations, p.6.

130. P. Gazette, 1 December, 1893, local correspondent.



Fig. 2

Examples of Family Employment in the Pottery Industry

Source: CATU COLL, William Broad's Collector's Book for July 1920 - June 1921, covering the Basford Area of Stoke.

Name	Place of Work	Occupation	Union Contribution rate
Ducketts. 3, Helvetia Terrace			
Mr Ducketts	Wengers Ltd	Foreman	6
Mrs "	" "	Warehouse	3
Ethel "	Vickers Ltd	Presser	3
Ada "	" "	"	2
Munslows 160, Shelton New Rd.			
Mr J.H. Munslow	Twyfords	Pressman	6
Edith "	"	Warehouse	3
Dorothy "	"	Glazier	3
Hopkinsons 150, Shelton New Rd			
Mr John Hopkinson	Fieldings	Saggarmaker	6
Sara "	"	Labourer	3
Wm. "	"	Saggarmaker	3
Nellie "	"	-	3
Gordons. 146, Shelton New Rd.			
C. Gordon	Cauldon	Transferrer	3
E "	"	Enameller	2
Eva "	Twyfords	Warehouse	2
Phyllis "	Cauldon	Gilder	2
Rabus. 54, Brick kiln Lane.			
Flo. Rabus	Ridgeways	Warehouse	3
E. "	"	"	2
M "	"	Dishmaker	2
Tinsley. 93, Victoria St			
Wm. Tinsley	-	-	6
Ethel "	New Hall Works	Gilder	3
Annie "	" " "	"	3
Dolly "	" " "	"	3
Cameron. 86, Victoria St.			
John Cameron	Twyfords	Millman	6
Angus "	"	Fireclay	6
Christine "	Wedgwoods	Figuremaker	3
Durrants. 2, Clarence St.			
E Durrant	Wedgwoods	Ornamentress	3
A "	"	"	3
Bert "	"	Turner	6
A "	"	-	3

Having revealed that the family or kin relations were common features of the social structure of the potbank we must now discover what role the family played at work. One manifestation of the family's role was in transmitting skills and securing job inheritance. Area 23 of Burslem union lodge in 1920 contained 36 family membership groups. By tracing the occupations of each member of each family the significance of the family to job succession becomes apparent. In the case of the male workers, 40% of the sons followed the same trade as their fathers. In the female's case, 48% of the daughters worked in the same job as their mothers. If we plot the workers who followed their parents into the same department (i.e. pressing, firing, dipping. See Fig. 1) the connection is even stronger. 74% of the daughters and 63% of the sons worked in the same department as their parents.<sup>131</sup>

Job succession was both a source of maintaining a family's collective earning power and a form of craft or worker pride. It was also another example of how potters could attempt to control details of their work. The method of employing labour was not entirely random. Skilled workers, as we have seen, enjoyed the discretion of employing workers of their choosing. Other members of the family or near relatives were a natural choice. Also, potters enhanced their social standing, their commitment to the workshop, by successfully introducing and training relatives. They demonstrated that they could 'speak for' someone. Owners were often happy to make use of these informal recruitment methods. They saved time and they could also become a means of ensuring the loyalty of the

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131. CATU COLL, Burslem Lodge Membership Register, Area 23. The sample is particularly relevant since in 1920 the union density was almost 70% of the workforce.

sponsor by increasing his or her need to maintain employment. Examples of job inheritance are legion. For instance, in the firing department, three instances come readily to hand. D. Corbishley was the fireman at Pratt & Co. of Fenton in December 1909. His father had been fireman there for 53 years and his grandfather had been employed at Pratts for 68 years. It was well known that Thomas Edwards, secretary of the Ovenmen's Society followed his father's 'calling'. In 1914 we find William Hallan working beside his father as a placer, as he learned the art of firing at Barlow's in Longton.<sup>132</sup> The strength of family employment is important to our analysis of the social structure of the pottery industry. Family and kin relations could strengthen the solidarity of the workgroup and certainly influenced the family consciousness exhibited by the groups.<sup>133</sup> On the other hand owners also made use of the associated family ties. The evidence from the pottery industry generally agrees with Tilly and Scott who have highlighted the family workgroup or the employment of family members throughout a factory in the 19th and early 20th century. As we shall confirm, 'either way they were considered and apparently considered themselves members of a team, earning a family wage'.<sup>134</sup> The potters can also extend the application of Anderson's model who found that the textile industry in Lancashire adapted to and respected kin and community ties in recruitment and work allocation.<sup>135</sup> Recent

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132. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1907, p.929, 1 December 1909, p.1415, and 1 June, 1915, p.783. Eyre-Stringer, New Hall Porcelain, p.58.

133. N. Dearle, Industrial Training, p.237. H. Bosanquet, The Family (1906), pp. 200-215. Young & Wilmott, pp. 40, 89 and 94. Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, p.142.

134. Tilly and Scott, *ibid.*, p.113.

135. Anderson, Family Structure in Lancashire, p.35.

work on the Yorkshire textile industry allied with the pottery case provides a clear criticism of those who assert that by the late 19th century worker status was predominantly a function of individual wage labour.<sup>136</sup>

Humphries argues that the persistence of the family among the working class can be partly explained by firstly the family's ability to reproduce labour power for employers to use and secondly because workers defended an institution which enabled them to both organise and come to terms with work. A woman potter provided an instance of this dual relevance of the family.<sup>137</sup> On the one hand she saw how her family, in the 1900s, had been used by her employer. The firm traded on family loyalty during commercial crises and she clearly felt her father, mother and herself were inadequately paid. At the same time she was adamant that it was 'the family' that had found her a job, trained her and provided a physical and emotional resource throughout her days on the 'bank.'

The intersection of work and home can be also seen in the direct effect of the pottery industry's economic performance and wage structure on worker housing. One of the best summaries is Harold Owen's study of 1901. He recorded how wage and job status on the potbank was reflected in a potter's home. The higher trade - such as throwers and firemen apparently maintained homes which could resemble 'that of the manager, or even the small manufacturer'. Around half of the workforce lived in some form of four-room, rented cottage where it was 'a constant struggle to keep the home together in ordinary comfort'. Below these two groups were

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136. J. Bornat, 'Home and Work. A new context for trade union history', Radical America, Vol. 12, No. 5, 1977, pp. 52-69.

137. J. Humphries, 'Class struggle and the persistence of the working class family', Cambridge Journal of Economics, Vol. 1, Sept. 1977, pp. 241-258. Interview with E.G.

the remainder: 'a class which lives in dirty overcrowded houses, is dependent on the pawn shop at frequent crises, and is in regular but ill-paid work or only fitfully employed'. Obviously this is a fairly crude characterisation of the quality of workers' homes in the Potteries,<sup>138</sup> yet the point is made: in broad terms, the badges of home and work were both seen as establishing someone's social standing.

In particular, the housing problems of the region were partly the result of the low wages of many potters in the face of relatively high rents. As the residential density and tenement surveys of the time indicate there was an acute housing problem.<sup>139</sup> Local building markets and municipal policies apart, the basic problem was that low employment and wage levels meant that many potters were unable to afford housing adequate to their families' needs. As a relieving officer put it in 1906: 'a general increase in wages would no doubt enable many families to afford a house more suited to the size of the family'. As workers went on short time or were laid off, relations were forced to move in with each other and lodgers were 'frequently taken'.<sup>140</sup> It is important to recognise this aspect of the relationship between a potter's work experience and his or her home. At the time, it was the woman potter who received the blame for working 'while the children and homes suffer'.

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138. H. Owen, Staffordshire Potter, pp. 344-347. Nixon, 'Emergence of the Factory System', pp. 220-225. Cf. Matsumura, 'The Flint Glass Makers', p.370.

139. Astor, The Third Winter of Unemployment, pp. 295-297. T.W. Harrison, 'Municipal Dwellings for the Poor', S. Sentinel, 18 November, 1902.

140. Royal Comm. Poor Law, in loc cit., p.165. R. Squire, Cost of Living of Working Classes (Hanley, 1908), pp. 215-220. E.J. Warrilow, A Sociological History of the City of Stoke-on-Trent (Stoke 1960), pp. 192, 218 and 322. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1918, p.464. For an analysis of local housing markets see Hunt, British Labour History, pp. 89-98, and M. Daunton, Coal Metropolis. Cardiff 1870-1914 (Leicester Univ. Press 1977) pp. 102-105.

In fact the reverse was true. Only because women worked did so many potters' families survive economically. Indeed it was the family mode of work which enabled potters to overcome the periodic crises of intermittent employment and poverty. Poor households sent as many members as possible into wage earning employment. The potters had not reached the stage where, according to some writers, increased productivity and higher male wages permitted a sharper division of labour within the household: married women were not simply 'preferred as child-care and consumer specialists'.<sup>141</sup> Traditional work practices, and the need for family income led to almost 20% of the total female population of the Potteries working in the staple industry in 1911. Hilda Martindale found that 'a woman is looked upon as lazy unless she takes her share in contributing to the family income' since the main impulse to work was 'prompted by necessity'. Also, since potters' families were large by national standards it became imperative that as many members as possible went out to work in order to contribute to the collective upkeep of the home.<sup>142</sup> Children were routine contributors to the domestic purse, making Stoke-on-Trent the second largest area of juvenile (aged 10-14 years) employment in the country after Lancashire. A great deal of negative criticism was levelled at the potters, owners and workers, by outraged middle-class philanthropists during this period.<sup>143</sup>

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141. Humphries, in loc.cit., p.140. Tilly and Scott, Women, Work and Family, pp. 230-231. See M. Hewitt, Wives and Mothers, p.20, on the nineteenth century pottery industry.

142. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1895, p.366. H. Martindale to Physical Det. C<sup>ee</sup> pp. 123 and 126-127. Staffordshire Census, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921. Occupation Tables of Males and Females Aged 10 Years and upwards. Note also how women potters remained at work beyond their 20s. In 1921, 20.1% of the female workforce was aged 35 and over. See Table 10. The pottery industry had one of the highest proportions of married women workers in the country. The figure for pottery was 28-31% of the female workforce; for textiles 21% and wood and furniture 23%, the national average was 10.3%. See B. Hutchins, Women in Modern Industry (1915) pp. 80-84. Report of the War Cabinet C<sup>ee</sup> on Women in Industry (1919) Cmd. 135, p.23. P. Gazette, 1 October 1908, p.1188.

143. Departmental C<sup>ee</sup> on the Employment of Children Act 1907 (1910) pp. 101-103, Q.2419. The Census of England and Wales 1911, General Report, Cmd. 8491 (1917), Diagram XXXIV. See the comments in The Christian Commonwealth, 7 January 1904. The Daily News, 2, 8, 9 Jan., 1904. S. Sentinel, 9 & 11 Jan., 1904.

Potters themselves were more realistic: a job, and if possible entry to a skilled job ladder, was vital for the family in the short term and the individual youngster in the long run (hence the weight attached by potters to job succession). A contemporary commentator noted that 'the opinion prevails that as parents they have not done their duty unless they have seen to it that every girl as well as a boy (my emphasis) is provided with a trade'.<sup>144</sup>

The potter's family not only united the worlds of home and work but also provided the means of survival for many workers. We need to look at the family more closely in order to discover its full relevance to the experience of work and its possible impact on trade unionism. It is necessary to ask what were the gender roles involved and how did the public image of workers' households and working lives compare to reality. In particular we must discover what the status of women in the home was, and how it related to their position at work. The answers to each of these questions had implications for the women potters self-image, consciousness and the actions they took.

Compared to contemporary prevailing middle-class notions, the roles of men and women in a potter's household were quite different. So often the working class family has been seen as essentially patriarchal. A contemporary social commentator ventured in 1911 that: 'we are still inclined to regard the family as the one relic of the patriarchal system' for 'we are still apt to see in the home a small world, edged off from the large world outside, self-centred, self-ruled and carrying all the

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144. H. Martindale to Physical Dept. C<sup>ee</sup>, p.127. S. Advertiser, 25 December, 1925. J. Foster-Fraser, The Tragedy of the Potteries, pp. 141-155. Cf. A. Freeman, Boy Life and Labour (1914) p.172.

advantages of a benevolent despotism'. Later authors maintain that in the family and domestic sphere 'men stood at its head, their place sustained in the vast majority of working class households by their role as principal breadwinner'.<sup>145</sup> The potters' family ran counter to both the contemporary and more recent generalisations.<sup>146</sup> Admittedly many male potters regarded themselves as the breadwinner of the family. A fireman in 1908 based his case to an arbitration committee on the inadequacy of his wage. Five shillings a day was insufficient to 'give adequate support to his wife and family'. There was a tradition of male superiority throughout the preceding century. In 1844, William Evans publicly berated women for going out to work since it reversed all natural order.<sup>147</sup> However, we have seen that there was a strong and continuous presence of female labour in the pottery industry and that women did contribute to the maintenance of home and family. More importantly, there is good evidence to show that women potters were, in their own way, equally important to the direction, organisation and funding of the domestic economy as many male workers.

The male potter may have enjoyed the public image of being the titled head of the family, but it was the woman who was so often at the centre of that family. The woman's strategic position was one of domestic

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145. R. Bray, Boy Labour and Apprenticeship (1911), p.92. S. Meacham, A Life Apart. The English Working Class 1890-1914 (1977) p.116.

146. See also, P.N. Stearns, 'Working Class Women in Britain 1890-1914', in M. Vicinus (ed.), Suffer and Be Still. Women in the Victorian Age (1972), p.105. 'many women among the poor were resigned to their lot. Their expectations were very limited'. H. Hartmann, 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex', in M. Blaxall & B. Reagan (eds.), Women in the Workplace (Chicago, 1976).

147. T. Edwards, P. Gazette, in loc.cit. Potteries Examiner, 2 November, 1844; 9 January, 1875; 23 March 1878 and 8 November, 1879.



manager. A local labour paper was aware of this role. In the words of one of its regular correspondents: 'the lot of a workman's wife, especially if the family happens to become a large one, is one of the most arduous and responsible possible to conceive, for upon her devolves the financing of the too often uncertain income of the family'. Union officials reported that the woman was typically the domestic banker. For example, in January 1925 Harold Moore's mother would not let him join the union since it would upset her financial calculations. Another woman ceased to pay her husband's dues (a revealing act in itself) since she could no longer contain them within the weekly expenditures.<sup>149</sup> In common with other women workers the female potters combined wage labour with domestic chores. The ability to meet the demands of your workgroup and your family meant that women were not marginal but central figures in the world of factory and household labour. This is not to suggest that women dominated the household: rather to draw attention to their positive yet unnoticed contribution to their families.<sup>150</sup>

The public image of the woman potter was one of dependency.<sup>151</sup> The reality was quite different. Given the economic circumstances of the industry, along with the effects of industrial disease, in many cases the woman became the main and sometimes sole breadwinner for a family. In 1908 Sam Clowes testified that women potters 'are sometimes the sole support of the house'. To take some concrete instances. In 1916 a letter

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149. CATU COLL, L30 Survey 1924, see footnote 13, Areas 7 and 24.

150. E. Pleck, in loc.cit., S. Advertiser, 17 February & 24 August, 1906. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1900 p.303. A Tovey cited in P. Thompson, The Edwardians. The Remaking of British Society (1975) p.332 ff. S. Kleinberg, 'Technology and women's work: the lives of working class women in Pittsburgh, 1870-1900', Labor History, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1976, pp. 58-72.

151. H. Owen, op.cit., p.247. Ben Tillet speech in Staffordshire Knot, 28 November, 1891. J. Boote, S. Advertiser, 11 May, 1907, p.5. Cf. E. Richards, op.cit., p.343 and 352.

from Messrs. Plant & Co. records how a 21 year old woman requested a wage rise from 7s. 6d. to 12s. because 'she happens to have a grandmother over 80 years of age, and she is the only bread-winner'. In 1910 a woman trade unionist visited two workers. It was noted that 'one was, by reason of her husband's unemployment, bread-winner of her family, whilst the other had a mother and sister dependent upon her labours'.<sup>152</sup> The Medical Officers of Health reports and the field notes of the factory inspectors are punctuated with such examples.<sup>153</sup> It was noticeable how the classic roles of male provider and female receiver were reversed in the Potteries, as witnessed by Maud Garnett's testimony to the Physical Deterioration Committee in 1904.<sup>154</sup> She was asked:

Question: Very frequently the man does nothing?

M.G.: Yes.

Question: Does he live on his wife's earnings?

M.G.: Yes, he looks after the children in a certain way.

Question: Are there many cases in which the man stays at home while the woman goes out to work?

M.G.: Yes, in Longton [where Maud worked]

Hilda Martindale found that 'men and boys willingly do their part in the domestic work of the house'. The Committee of Women in Industry's findings of 1919 apply precisely to the Potteries. As we shall confirm with regard to female union activity, there existed in our period 'a conventional view of women's work, which still recognises for women ideals which are more or less incompatible with the facts of everyday life'.<sup>155</sup>

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152. S. Clowes to 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup>, Q.6511. WTUL, Quarterly Report, 3 July, 1910, p.3.

153. HMI Factories Report, 1906, p.234 and 1907, pp. 171 and 198.

154. M. Garnett, Physical Det. C<sup>ee</sup>, Qs. 9351-9354: role reversal was often associated with the male under- or unemployment of the period.

155. H. Martindale, in loc.cit., App. U, p.127. Daily Chronicle, 19 July, 1892, p.6. C<sup>ee</sup> on Women in Industry (1919), pp. 37-42.

A danger also lies in assuming that most women workers were part of traditional households made up of parents and children. As the General Report of the 1911 Census shows, the position of widowed and unmarried women must be taken into account. The demographic feature of 'surplus women', especially in urban areas, meant that many women did not marry. Hutchins reminded us of this simple social fact as long ago as 1915.<sup>156</sup> The greatest problem for isolated, widowed or single women potters was their low wages. It was estimated in 1906 that 14s. 6d. was the minimum sum necessary for a woman living independently to maintain herself in 'decency and with a meagre degree of comfort'. The average full-time earnings of a woman potter at that time was only 11s. per week: nearly 30% of female potters earned less than 10s.<sup>157</sup> Clearly some single women were members of extended family units to which they contributed their pay and received bed, board and pocket money in return. However, from a range of local sources it appears that many single women had to live and fend for themselves or were the sole supporters of aged or infirm relatives. Besides the survey work of the Women's Trade Union League and charitable bodies, certain pottery manufacturers in 1908 noticed the problem. A member of the Ridgway firm questioned whether the wages of some women were enough 'to allow a single woman to feed herself properly and to give her all the opportunities which would keep her in health and make her efficient'.<sup>158</sup> The predicament of unmarried mothers without

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156. 1911 Census, General Report, Diagram XXXII, p.158. In 1901 and 1911 for every 1000 of population there were 484 males and 516 females. Hutchins, Women in Modern Industry, pp. 78-80.

41. J. Mallon, 'Women's wages in the Wage Census of 1906' in Hutchins, p.213 ff. 1906 Wage Census, Earthenware, p.102. In 1901 69.23% of the women potters were unmarried, in 1911, 66.9% and 1921, 64.86%. In 1911 4.35% of the female workforce were widows, and in 1921, 5.54%. Staffordshire Census, 1901, p.69; 1911, Table 22 and 1921 Table 16.

158. HMI Factories Report, 1911, p.146. WTUL Quarterly Review, July, 1909, p.6. 1910 Lead C<sup>o</sup>, Qs. 13702 and 13717.

means of support 'other than their own labour' was unenviable as the recorded cases alone demonstrate.<sup>159</sup> Widowed women pottery workers were often in a similar position. The numbers of widowed female potters are conspicuous in the Stoke and Wolstanton Poor Law Union's records. One widow for example had five children to support and so she scraped tiles at 1s for four boards; working at her hardest she could not earn more than 10s. per week.<sup>160</sup>

The relationship of home, family and work is of great value to our explanation of the historical experience of the potters, both individually and collectively. Connexions between these three elements of working class life provide a number of contexts for the development of trade unionism, for the modes of bargaining and conflict and especially for the forms of consciousness among the potters. These contexts were highly ambivalent. A basic feature of the intersection of work and home was the dependency of not only the patriarch but the whole family on their work. With so few alternative forms of employment the potter's family was heavily reliant on the potbank. As in other single industry regions, the succession of generations of potters 'working in the pots' and the close physical presence of the workplace made employment in the staple industry the almost unquestioned basis for your working life.<sup>161</sup> The psychological dominance of the industry over the Six Towns combined with the mutual obligations of a potter's family or kin had a critical bearing

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159. G. Tuckwell, *ibid.*, Q.6513. R. Squire to Royal Comm. Poor Law, p.165. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1911, p.195. and S. Advertizer, 6 Oct., 1906, p.5.

160. Squire, in *loc.cit.* pp. 153 & 163. Whipp, 'Women Pottery Workers', pp. 67-68. Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Union Guardians' Minute Book, 1903-1905, Stafford County Record Office, 3506/1/13. cf. Cadbury, 'Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, p.214. P. Thane, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', History Workshop, No.6, Autumn 1978, p.33ff.

161. G. Newman, Infant Mortality. A Social Problem (1906) p.109. Cf. Holden, 'Industrial Relations at Vauxhall', p.19 for a similar interpretation of Luton.

on how potters responded to what we might construe to be blatantly unreasonable or hostile behaviour by employers or those in authority. Secondly, in spite of the experience of women potters to the contrary, individual and organised potters seemed to have retained the traditional patriarchal value of both the area and the wider society. Clearly these persistent images and norms presented difficulties for the assertion of independent activity by women potters.<sup>162</sup>

Yet we would maintain that there were positive elements within the relationship of home and work which have been overlooked. Some of pottery work's informal aspects reveal the potential for workgroup and family solidarity, as well as the active role women could play. We have noted how family or kin relationships helped soften the alienating effects of work. This held true for women in particular. Female potters appear to have enjoyed and valued highly the friendship and sociability of work. A woman jollier remarked: 'I would rather be at work a hundred times than at home, I get lost at home'. Information and trading networks were useful and accepted parts of potbank life.<sup>163</sup> Subscription clothing clubs (known as 'maxims'), ad hoc medical schemes and workshop parties were all part of the unofficial uses to which the workshop was put. It was therefore in work that many women found a measure of independence and identity. The small-scale unstructured means of pooling information and

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162. Mr. Myott in The Frobishers, p.259. See articles by F. O'Rourke in S. Sentinel, October, 1900 and Arnold Bennett's opinions 28 December, 1903. For the continuity of the stigma of women's work see Richards, 'Women and the Economy', p.352, and A. Marwick, Women at War 1914-1918 (1977) pp. 16 & 152. For a classic summary of the social values operating against women see, B. Webb, Webb T.U. Collection, Vol. XLVII, 'Difficulties of Organising Women', pp. 15-16.

163. HMI Factories Report, 1906, p.255. Physical Deterioration C<sup>ee</sup>, App. V. p.127. Thompson, The Edwardians, p.76, thrower's daughter.

passing on knowledge were as much the arena for female as male activity. Women found the family, the workgroup and the informal relationships of the potbank were locations where they could play an active part in determining their own lives and helping to sustain others.<sup>164</sup> This relatively untreated feature of the potters' social life became a vital strength of the emerging industrial union after 1906.

## 2.6 Health and Work

Probably the most direct penetration of home life by work came in the form of industrial disease and illness. For some families the effects of work on their members' health came to dominate their lives. Health became a preoccupation of both individual workers and their unions, and clearly influenced the content of industrial relations. Before examining how 'potters' rot' or 'plumbism' became key issues for both management and labour it is necessary to establish the extent and effects of industrial disease on the potter's working life. The experience of the potters' health in relation to work may be explored in three main areas: the effect of poor working conditions; the problem of lead poisoning and the impact of dust disease.

The pottery industry had long been noted for its poor working conditions. An inquiry in 1863 was in no doubt: pottery manufacture was 'accompanied by the physical deterioration, wide-spread bodily suffering and early death of the workpeople'. Put beside pottery, Engels thought cotton spinning was 'an agreeable and healthful occupation'.<sup>165</sup>

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164. Interview with E.G. NCPI Mins. 21 May, 1925 re shop trading. Physical Det. C<sup>ee</sup>, Q.9087: J. Liddington and J. Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us (1978) show similar relationships operating elsewhere.

165. Report of Commission of Inquiry into State of Children's Employment, 28 July, 1863, pp. viii - xlviii. F. Engels, Condition of the Working Classes (1971 edn.), pp. 249-251 and 234-235. C.N. Davies, Health Conditions in the Ceramic Industry (1969) p.11.

This reputation persisted throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, with good reason. The registrar general's figures for 1880-1882 show earthenware had the highest mortality rates for all occupations and almost double the national average. In the 1890s the death rate of the potter was twice the average of all other industries for the age range 45-65. By the 1900s pottery's death rate per thousand far exceeded those for the notoriously dangerous coal or lead mines; for the 25-55 age range, the mortality rate was the highest in the country. A mass health survey of 1926 indicates how poor was the general physical state of most potters. Converting the figures to the standard occupational list we used in Table 6, it emerges that only four occupations were rated as being of above average physique.<sup>166</sup> It was these types of figures which led the Co-operative Insurance Company in 1919 to inform potters that they would have to be considered seven years older than their true age in any insurance contract. Harry Johnson, Chairman of the manufacturers' association made the matter-of-fact observation in 1912 that 'of course the potters are generally noted not to be long livers. It has never struck me more than with regard to the ordinary potters'.<sup>167</sup>

Why was this so? Primarily, the working conditions of the potter were unhealthy and insanitary. In contrast to the delicate, refined

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166. Royal Commission on Labour, Final Report (1894) para. 477. Report of the Conditions of Labour in the Potteries, 1893, p.4. The Departmental C<sup>ee</sup> on Industrial Diseases, the Samuel Report (1907), Cd. 3496, p.375. Board of Trade, Abstracts of Labour Statistics of the U.K. (Ministry of Labour from 1919), 'Diseases of Occupation', 1912, pp. 166-167 and 170-171; 1914, pp. 180-181 and 182-183, and 1933, pp. 184-185 and 190-191. Calculated from Sutherland and Bryson, Silicosis in the Pottery Industry (HMSO 1926), Table 2, categories 1-83.

167. CATU COLL, L36, Co-operative Society to NSPW, 3 June, 1919. 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, H. Johnson, Q.1063.

image of china and crockery the potbanks were often old, delapidated and poorly constructed. Lack of capital and building space in the Potteries was a problem. Conditions were very primitive. Providing water and toilet facilities had never been a standard obligation for many owners. By the logic of the sub-employment system it was the workgroup who management deemed responsible for such matters. The developing notions of 'rest-rooms' and the concern with floor and air space were entirely foreign to both worker and owner. Dirt was a commonplace of the potbank; a result of the large volumes of smoke which enveloped the buildings each day.<sup>168</sup>

Two contributing factors to the low physical condition of the pottery worker were the heat and carrying involved in certain tasks. In the absence of a mature scientific understanding of ceramics plus the lack of detailed knowledge about operations within the production process many owners were genuinely unaware and unconcerned with the physical experience of work. A Mr. Shuter in 1909 was 'much struck by the ignorance displayed by many of the occupiers [of the rented 'banks] and managers as to the actual temperature at which they drew their ovens'. He found temperatures varying from 70° to 80°F in potting shops, from 85° to 90° in dipping houses, while men were found drawing ovens in temperatures varying from 100° to 167°F.<sup>169</sup> The pressure within the piece work and gang system coupled with the large capital and

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168. W. Callear in E. Werner, Pottery Regulations (NCPI Hanley 1924), p.25. HMI Factories Report, 1904, p.92, 1906, p.216ff and 1910, p.vi. Lead Compounds in Pottery. Report to the Secretary of State for Home Department, T.E. Thorp and T. Oliver (1899) p.15.

169. HMI Factories Report, 1909, pp. 37 & 46. See temperature recordings in 1907, p.157. P. Gazette, 27 July, 1908, p.1074.



running costs of ovens, meant that continuous use was the rule. A 'fallow' or empty oven cost owners and ovenmen money. However, continuous use meant that there was insufficient time left for ovens to cool. Men entered the ovens swathed in towels in order to ward off direct heat, thereby running the risks of asphyxiation and even heart failure. Local doctors publicly attacked the system as 'brutalising to the men'. In their own ways, manufacturers and potters saw the risks being offset against the financial returns. In some cases workers were actually 'proud' of the way they flaunted physical danger: it was an emblem of their trade.<sup>170</sup>

Although most pottery products are essentially light, even fragile, the process of manufacture involved formidable physical exertion. Placers carried glost saggars weighing 60 - 80 lbs, and biscuit saggars of 80 - 100 lbs, when full. A team of placers would shift around 2,000 saggars, twice per oven. In other words 58 tons was handled in a two day period. It was an impressive feat and ovenmen's self-image reflected their prowess. As one put it in 1924: 'I have seen no class of labour which calls into play a man's physical energies like pottery oven work'.<sup>171</sup> Far less prestigious yet, in relative terms, equally taxing were the myriad, attendant carrying jobs. A plentiful supply of female and juvenile labour, set against the inappropriateness of machinery, meant that assistants were used to convey clay, glaze, slip and scraps. A specialist in industrial health concluded that there was no industry where so much

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170. Dr. Moody's observations for 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, Qs. 602-617, and evidence of Mr. Benson, Qs. 551-2. P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1907, p.1199. L. Deane Streatfield notebook, note no. 10, re Henry Wagstaffe, dipper. M.R.C. "Ceramics".

171. 1924 Wage Inquiry p.46 and App. 8, 'weight of saggars'. Excellent description of oven work, T. Edwards to Royal Commission on Labour, Vol.III Feb. 1893, p.83.

danger was incurred through the carrying of heavy weights, as in the manufacture of earthenware. Women clay carriers were expected to carry 'wads' of clay weighing 70 lbs and more. A clay carrier might shift 20 wads a day. Along with the rigours of treading and hand batting, carrying induced strain and related illness, especially among women.<sup>172</sup>

We should be wary of attributing poor working conditions and physically strenuous or debilitating jobs to all potbanks and forms of work. There was a wide variation of experience. Fluctuations in demand clearly affected the intensity of work. During peak demand, longer hours and increased pace (known as 'rabbit racing') compounded the problems we have noted. Alternatively, unemployment and under-employment reduced the effect as the official statistics show. A second variant could be the type of firm. Broadly, the larger works were better equipped, often of more recent design. Meakins, Mintons and Twyfords for example built new factories during this period. The Cauldon Place works is a good example, covering 13 acres. At the other extreme were the back street outfits who rented equipment, hired labour on an entirely casual basis and often remained in business for a matter of months. These were the men 'who have a little capital and want to get their work done on small wages and abuse the conditions of labour'.<sup>173</sup> Unfortunately the neat distinction between large and small companies needs qualification. Some of the largest potbanks produced the worst figures for industrial disease and contained many insanitary features. Grindley's for example

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172. A. Anderson to Physical Deterioration C<sup>68</sup>, Q.1503. HMI Factories Report, 1906, p.219; 1907, p.170 and 1911, p.148. A. Tovey in Thompson, op.cit., p.340.

173. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1918, p.803. HMI Factories Report, 1906, p.214. Anon, 'A Visit to the Potteries', Englishwoman's Review No. 15, December 1906, pp. 8-11. Wedgwood, Hansard, 1911, col. 294. W. Scarratt, Old Times in the Potteries (Stoke 1906) p.175.

Table 11

Lead Poisoning in Pottery Manufacture and British Industry 1900-1930

Source: Board of Trade Abstract of Labour Statistics of the UK (1933), Industrial Diseases, pp. 184-185.

DISEASE AND INDUSTRY	CASES.																															
	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	
LEAD POISONING																																
Smelting of Metals	34	34	28	37	33	24	38	28	70	66	34	48	56	26	24	45	25	9	19	58	22	26	21	36	20	37						
Brass Works	3	6	5	15	10	5	11	9	6	5	7	9	5																			
Sheet Lead and Lead Piping	17	17	12	11	7	9	7	6	14	9	4	12	4																			
Plumbing and Soldering	9	23	23	26	21	24	16	20	27	28	25	37	35	34	10	6	7	8	12	23	17	16	17	9	12	8						
Printing	18	23	19	13	15	19	16	26	30	21	33	32	37	21	10	9	12	11	6	6	8	8	10	4	8	7						
File Cutting	60	46	27	24	20	12	15	10	9	8	9	18	13																			
Tinning and Enamelling	16	19	14	18	13	16	22	31	17	24	34	32	30	18	3	4	9	5	7	12	13	10	15	24	12	4						
White Lead Works	358	189	143	109	116	90	108	71	79	32	34	41	23	36	25	28	17	22	37	20	19	13	21	9	8	3						
Red and Yellow Lead Works	19	14	13	6	11	10	6	7	12	10	10	13	8																			
China and Earthenware	200	106	87	97	106	84	107	103	117	58	77	92	80	63	21	25	35	62	44	47	47	41	14	23	14	23						
Litho-transfer Works	10	7	2	3	3	5	5	10	2	1	1	1	1																			
Glass Cutting and Polishing	7	11	8	4	...	3	4	4	3	4	...	5	1																			
Electrical Accumulator Works	33	49	16	28	33	27	26	21	25	27	31	24	38	44	48	47	35	32	95	101	73	52	58	33	23	36						
Paint and Colour Works	56	56	44	39	32	57	37	35	25	39	17	21	12	22	11	9	13	14	11	15	8	10	6	12	8	6						
Coach Makers	70	65	63	74	49	54	85	70	70	95	70	104	84	71	11	13	20	15	13	30	24	14	15	18	9	10						
Shipbuilding/breaking	32	28	15	24	48	32	24	22	15	27	21	36	34	31	8	9	11	31	46	40	44	16	42	39	21	30						
Paint used in other industries	50	61	44	46	27	49	37	49	47	42	51	56	48	49	9	10	12	23	21	24	14	16	7	11	11	5						
Other industries	86	89	64	40	56	70	66	56	78	57	47	88	84	120	18	25	27	22	18	28	31	14	111	98	91	80						
TOTAL	1,088	863	629	614	591	592	632	578	646	553	505	669	587	535	207	243	230	249	337	490	327	243	348	327	245	267						
DEATHS in Pottery Industry	8	5	4	3	4	3	4	9	12	5	11	6	14	11	8	13	11	17	11	18	5	14	6	10	11	10						

spent £10,000 on a 'new model factory' in March 1908 yet in May of that year the company was prosecuted for its workshop temperatures and large number of poisoning cases. Doulton's, an international firm and potters by appointment to royalty had no proper washing facilities in 1900.<sup>174</sup>

Lead poisoning had a far stronger impact on the life of a potter than the effects of insanitary, heavy or unnaturally hot labour. 'Plumbism' became a grisly hallmark of the pottery industry. Pieces of ware were coated with a glaze. The main functions of the glaze were to coat the porous body with an impervious substance and to give the final product a smooth, glass-like finish. Lead was a basic constituent of the glaze, and was also used in decorating colours. White and red lead glazes were 'indispensable' to the English potter. In 1905 384 out of 487 potbanks used a lead based glaze. By 1927 294 factories still used some form of lead glaze.<sup>175</sup> The result of using lead appears in Table 11. The table indicates the nominal extent of lead poisoning cases and deaths among pottery workers. Pottery had the dubious distinction of producing the highest lead poisoning figures of any industry.

The figures relating to cases of poisoning show a secular decline, although the decline is irregular and contains a number of short-term rises. Deaths arising from plumbism were increasing yet the series fluctuates sharply from year to year. The conclusion to be drawn from these figures is that lead poisoning was a major characteristic of the pottery industry. However, these official figures require scrutiny.

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174. P. Gazette, 1 March, p.349 and 1 May, p.585, 1908. Hansard, 23 February, 1900, Col. 983. HMI Factories Report, 1908, p.141.

175. 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup>, pp. 5-7 and pp. 83-84. Dinns, Ceramic Technology, p.646. W. Joynson-Hicks, Hansard, 15 March, 1927, Col. 1856.

First and foremost, the figures are undoubtedly an underestimate. Official returns recorded only the cases notified by doctors or certifying surgeons. Workers were simply afraid of doctors or the consequences of an examination. The doctors themselves complained about the statistics. As one put it: 'It is very hard to obtain reliable figures. The women working in the dangerous processes are very loath to give particulars, for they feel that if they make out the case to be as bad as it is they will lose their job'.<sup>176</sup> Men were only examined under the factory regulations after 1903. Returns were found to be faulty by union officials and outside experts. Inquests attributed the cause of death to the side effects of lead poisoning rather than the disease itself. After 1899, factory surgeons could suspend from work any potter whose state of health might dispose them to plumbism: those under suspension were excluded from the recorded figures. Secondly, the aggregate figures conceal that women were affected by the disease more than men. In 1908 for example, the attack rate per thousand for female was 26; for males it was only 12. Thirdly, different parts of the workforce had varying degrees of contact with lead and hence showed differing rates of poisoning.<sup>177</sup>

The direct and indirect effects of plumbism must be distinguished. The direct results were physiological. Potters absorbed lead by inhaling it in its powder form in the air or by swallowing traces left on the hands. Insanitary workshops increased the risk of absorption. Lead is a poison

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176. Dr. J.F. Arlidge, 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup>, App. XV. Hansard, 13 July, 1900 col. 1479 and 17 July, 1912, col. 430.

177. B. Wilson, 'Our Industrial Victims', Young Oxford, Vol. II, No. 16, January 1901, p.127. WTUL Quarterly Review, January 1903, p.28. R. Nash, Life and Death in the Potteries (n.d.) pp. 7 & 11, L.S.E. pamphlet collection, p185134. For differential attack rate see 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup> Report, Vol. p.129 and figs. pp. 68-97. The different attack rates were based mainly on the degree of contact with lead in your job and the relative physiological make-up of men and women.

which can have severe effects on the human body. Gastric disturbance was its mildest form: paralysis, blindness and degeneration of the brain and ultimately death were the acute variants. Nausea and violent headaches earned it the name 'the green sickness'. Paralysis of fingers, hands, and arms led to the sobriquet 'wrist drop'.<sup>178</sup>

The indirect effects of lead poisoning extended to the whole life style of the potter and his or her family. First came suspension from work. Official figures indicate an average of around 100 official suspensions per year. More common was the unofficial exclusion from work by employers who feared the legal and financial consequences of retaining a worker with incipient plumbism. Many workers were sacked. Meakins 'suspended' two such women in 1913 and never re-employed them.<sup>179</sup> In the more advanced stages work was impossible. Medical costs and reduced income from being both unemployed and unemployable produced serious problems for certain families. Those groups who attempted to research the effects of lead poisoning were agreed: the high levels of illness resulted in poverty, misery and degradation.<sup>180</sup> The Women's Trade Union League, officers of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law and the factory inspectorate, working independently, collected detailed case

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178. T. Oliver, The Dangerous Trades (1902) pp. 203 and 307. Oliver was the acknowledged authority on lead poisoning of his day. J.T. Arlidge, Pottery Manufacture in its Sanitary Aspects (Hanley 1892) p.15. B. Tuckwell, Commercial Manslaughter, The Nineteenth Century (August 1898, p.254.

179. Abstract of Labour Statistics. Accidents in Great Britain, 1914, pp. 180-181 and 1933, pp. 188-189. HMI Factories Report, 1906, p.215; 1908, p.240; 1911, p.294 & 1920, p.163. R. Nash, op.cit., p.3. Royal Comm. Poor Law, App.XVI, pp.162 & 164. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1913, p.1279. CATU COLL, I485, N.A.S. to Meakins, 13 May, 1913.

180. C. Dilke, Hansard, 1900, col.1481, 'it means after all in most cases, paralysis, loss of work, and dependence on charity throughout the remainder of life'. See cases for example of: HMI Factories Report, 1906, p.214 (CD. G.H.J.K.); B. Wilson, in loc.cit., pp.127-129 (AC, GB, LD). Royal Comm. Poor Law, p.164 (110), A.H., E.P., E.H., A.G., L.T., H.C., E.C., K.M.Z. and Census of women interviewed Stoke workhouse and infirmary.

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studies of the social costs of lead poisoning. Hilda Martindale provides us with an especially valuable insight. She was the resident inspectress in the Potteries from 1903-1908. She monitored workers over a number of years and found in 1905

in revisiting some of the reported cases of previous years, I have been impressed by the prolonged nature of the illness, and the many months of enforced idleness which it entails.

also

Ill health always brings with it exceptional poverty, and in the course of my visits to workers I have, as in former years, been met with such cases of want, amounting in some cases almost to starvation.<sup>181</sup>

Lead poisoning had profound repercussions on the lives of parents and women in particular. As scientists knew at the time lead in a woman's bloodstream could provoke miscarriage and operate prejudicially upon the unborn child. Dr. Reid's work on the potters highlighted the incidence of miscarriages and still-births among women potters. In one study of 77 women lead workers 8 had experiences 21 still births; 35 admitted to having 90 miscarriages. 36 of the sample gave birth to 101 children of which only 61 were alive a year later. Some of the worst cases included a woman aged 35 who had worked with lead for 20 years and had been married for ten. She suffered eight miscarriages, gave birth to four children, of whom three died in infancy. The Potteries recorded some of the highest infant mortality rates in the country. Lead poisoning was a major contributory factor. One can only speculate on the psychological results of these experiences for the women concerned. From the testimony of women

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181. HMI Factories Report, 1905, p.291.

who suffered in this way and using the comments of potters at the time, the outcome was traumatic in terms of mental and bodily health.<sup>182</sup>

Dust based disease was the third type of industrial illness which afflicted the potters. Dust disease was eight times as prevalent as lead poisoning. One of the Samuel Report's main findings in 1907, was that the potters' death rate from respiratory diseases was four times the national average. 58% of the total mortality of pottery workers was accounted for by chest infection.<sup>183</sup> The siliceous particles in the clay and flint dust, which hung in the air of the potbank, inflicted great damage on lung cells, air tubes and the mucous membrane. Respiratory organs were rendered useless in varying degrees. The condition ranged from the asthmatic to the consumptive. In the latter stages parts of the lung were destroyed and malnutrition was often followed by death. In our period it was incurable. The experience of phthisis or 'potters rot' was widespread. In the 1930s the disease was said to have been 'created by the industry. It occurs in your best modern factories as well as on those which are tottering from age'. The common denominator was the use of flint. Susceptibility to the disease increased with the length of working career. Large-scale surveys in the inter-war years found that dust disease affected one in ten of all potters but for those who had worked over 20 years, one in every three was diseased.<sup>184</sup>

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182. W. Callar, 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.45. WTUL Quarterly Report, Oct. 1898. Physical Deterioration C<sup>ee</sup>, App.V, p.124. Interview with E.E. G. Newman, Infant Mortality, p.21, 108-109. British Medical Journal, Vol. 1, 1906, 10 February, p.311 & 24 February, pp. 428-430.

183. 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup> Vol. 1, p.41. The Times, 8 October, 1898, p.8. Fibroid phthisis or silicosis were the medical terms for the potters' form of lung disease; the condition was known locally as potters' rot or potters' asthma. A Meiklejohn, Silicosis (NCPI Hanley, 1933), p.3. NSPW Reconstruction, p.21. Samuel Report, A.M. McAldowie, Q.6853. Sutherland & Bryson, Silicosis in the Pottery Industry, p.5.

184. Samuel Report, App. XII. Sutherland & Bryson, p.5. Table 1. Meiklejohn, op.cit., p.3 & p.9.



The indirect effects of the condition were similar to those of lead poisoning. Even in the early stages, strength and mobility were so seriously impaired that regular work was impossible. Jabez Booth described the plight of a friend and others who contracted the disease in these terms:

he had it five or six years before he left the trade but he could keep on working now and again, as in the case with many potters. They work part time, and are ill two or three days, and may then scramble to work again for two or three days, it is positively a pain to see how some of the men suffer. I have seen numbers of them whom it has taken three hours in the morning to get to work.<sup>185</sup>

Sufferers experienced diminished income and, in time, unemployment. Dust diseases were no respecters of status. Craftsmen and skilled workers were as susceptible as any who worked in the pressing, cleaning, scouring or placing areas. Many skilled potters never enjoyed a full working life practising their original craft since ill health intervened. It was noticeable how potters were spoken of as being 'old before their time' and how 40 was the natural age limit for certain particularly dangerous occupations.<sup>186</sup>

The interpretation which the potters placed on their condition is difficult to assess. It is all too easy to assume that anger was engendered by their experience. According to national figures for 1906 to 1930 the potters were second only to miners in the numbers disabled from work by industrial disease,<sup>187</sup> yet protest and militancy was not the uniform response of potters individually or collectively. Firstly, at

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185. J. Booth to the Samuel Report, Q. 9384.

186. Ibid. Q.6878 and Dr. Arlidge, Q.6777. Meiklejohn, op.cit., pp. 8 and 16. Royal Commission on Labour, in loc.cit., Edwards, p.83.

187. See the fierce exchange between W. Callear and H. Johnson, 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, Qs. 1074-1079. Abstract of Labour Statistics, in loc.cit.

the individual or family level the experience of ill-health arising from work raised immediate fears and problems which had to be overcome. Anxiety over losing one's job and the threat of poverty were at the forefront of many potters' minds. The wife of A.H., a 33 year old dipper, with lead colic was 'in constant dread of his being laid aside everyday'. Lucy Streatfield discovered a defensive mentality was common among even 'the clean and respectable' potters who suffered or were threatened by the diseases of their trade. A process of immiseration was operating. One observer concluded that 'therein lies the really serious point of lead poisoning. It is not the actual numbers, but it affects the general condition of the workers'.<sup>188</sup>

Secondly, an equally pressing concern for afflicted potters, or families, was the need to survive and develop means of counteracting the well-known social consequences of illness. Cases of workers who were seriously ill yet who desperately tried to conceal their symptoms are well documented throughout the period. Sarah Sweeny's mother described how her daughter, who died of plumbism in August, 'was ill in June, but would not tell the certifying surgeon because she was afraid he would stop her from work'. Albert Crutchley, a glost placer at Aynsley's, aged 55, concealed his sickness for 18 months in order to continue working.<sup>189</sup> In the bouts of depressed trade workers were willing to accept employment despite its dangers. As one worker put it, 'just to keep the home going is the dominant thought'.<sup>190</sup> It was this need for

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188. L. Deane Streatfield, in loc.cit., p.269. Mr. Hills, Hansard, 1910, Col. 1279.

189. P. Gazette, 1 February, p.211 & 1 Sept., p.1074, 1908 and 1 June, 1913, p.90. Mr. Hills, Hansard, 1912, col. 430.

190. B. Wilson, 'Our Industrial Victims', Young Oxford, Vol. II, No.14, November 1900, pp. 52-53.

work, especially among the low paid potters, that made some ambivalent towards outside 'officials' who tried to help. Besides considerations of dignity and independence, trade union representatives, factory inspectors or health workers were often seen as interfering with a private concern and indeed could threaten one's livelihood. Tawney observed at first hand the suspicion in which such people were held. It was never, as some middle class philanthropists asserted, a question of abolishing lead and flint or closing old factories. Small wonder that some local doctors found it, in their words, 'impossible for them to secure the confidence of the workpeople'. Management and workers even colluded at thwarting factory inspections if that succeeded in keeping a potbank open and potters in work.<sup>191</sup>

This ambivalence clearly had consequences for the relations within the union. Leaving aside the role of owners in shaping opinion, union officials found that tensions existed around the issues of poisoning and 'potters rot'. Workers were not acquiescent about their condition as the Manchester Guardian wrongly assumed when it said: 'even a complete knowledge of lead poisoning has failed to make a large impression'. Quite the reverse, potters were not fatalistic but realistic. Many argued for the retention of lead for example, since it was so essential an ingredient to any potter, given the current state of ceramic science.<sup>192</sup> Instead, working potters contended that the lead should be rendered harmless. Moreover, health was not so useful an issue for organising

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191. J. Winter & D. Joslin, R.H. Tawney's Common place Book (1972) p.3, observed during his tutorial work in Longton, 1908-1912.

192. Manchester Guardian in P. Gazette, 1 March, 1899, p.346. H. Barrett Greene, The TUC Hanley, 1905, p.72.

or mobilising union members. On the one hand, dust disease was so widespread and unexceptional to generations of potters, that many workers treated the dangers involved as part of a way of life. On the other, the incidence of lead poisoning was not general but occurred within those sections of the workforce who used it.<sup>193</sup> This is not to say that potters did not protect and vigorously seek to change the conditions which perpetuated the miseries of industrial disease. Rather, in order to gauge the significance of industrial health we must realise how varied were both the contexts in which health was experienced and therefore the responses which it evoked.

### Conclusion

In these two sections we have tried to extend our analysis of work outside the workplace. It is argued that the two main areas of a potter's life, the worlds of workshop and home, cannot be separated: the spheres intersected. Four main elements of the inter-relation between home and work were identified. First there was the physical proximity, as home and potbank co-existed, often in each other's shadow: second, the mutual synchronisation of work rhythms and domestic routines.<sup>194</sup> Thirdly, the central link which bound workplace and home was the family. This provided a key resource for many potters either in the form of job entry or as a means of collective survival.<sup>195</sup> Fourthly, we distinguished

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193. For the folklore and the humour surrounding dust disease see Meiklejohn, op.cit., p.17. 1924 Wage Inquiry, App.10 for workers coming directly into contact with lead.

194. This runs counter to the picture of an almost inevitable growth in work discipline presented by E.P. Thompson, 'Time, Work-discipline and industrial capitalism' in M. Flinn & T. Smout, Essays in Social History (1974) pp. 43-66.

195. E. Roberts, 'Working-class standards of living in Barrow and Lancaster, 1890-1914', Economic History Review, 2nd series, Vol. XXX, No. 2, 1977, p.311. For the strength of individual task work and wage payment in America see C. Goldin, 'The Work and wages of single women, 1870-1920' in Journal of Economic History, Vol. XL; March 1980, No. 1, pp. 81-88.

between the direct and indirect effects of work on the potters' health as a means of assessing the relevance of industrial disease in the industry.

The analysis of home and work raised a number of related points. The potters' experience highlights how far from reality were the contemporary images of gender roles at work and in the family.<sup>196</sup> More recently historians have seen women as dependent within a patriarchal set of relationships. But via family work-ties, women could play an active role in supporting, and determining the forms of family life. While the man remained the publicly accepted head of the family, women were often the principal private organisers. On the evidence available, complete male dominance and female subordination is not an accurate picture of the relations within the potter's family.<sup>197</sup> Traditional local attitudes towards the role of women, combined with depressed trading, prevented most female potters from joining unions in the 19th century. In the period under review women do take a formal part in union activity. One reason was changed economic circumstances. The other was that women were able to use their informal positions and associations derived from the home and the 'bank, to great effect.<sup>198</sup> We have also qualified the assertion that the early 20th century saw the retreat of the family from work and its replacement by the individual wage earner. Our reconstruction of home and work dilutes the claims of the textile industry to a unique position regarding female and family labour.<sup>199</sup>

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196. A. Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood' in History Workshop, Issue 5, Spring 1978, pp. 49-56 & S. Rowbotham, Hidden from History, p.55 for similar demonstrations of the disparity.

197. For an exploration of this perspective see A. Kessler-Harris, 'Women, Work and the Social Order' in R.A. Carroll, Liberating Women's History (Chicago 1976) pp. 336-337.

198. H. Smith, 'Feminism and the Methodology of Women's History' in R.A. Carroll, op.cit., pp. 368-384, especially p.383, 'We cannot uncover the realities of women's past if we look at them as adjuncts to or as minor participants in the male power structure'.

199. K. Burgess, The Origins of British Industrial Relations (1975) p.244.

Finally, this analysis has deepened our understanding of social relations in the industry. Income and status divisions on the potbank appear to have been broadly reproduced in residential patterns and housing types. Yet in the workshop, the family workgroup helped to reshape some of the antagonisms which arose from the division of labour. The family contained and accommodated the tensions inherent in subcontracting as parents 'employed' their own offspring. The potter's family was central to the organisation of work and became one of the logical bases for informal action both inside and outside work. Our probes into trade unionism and conflict in the industry will therefore be guided by an awareness of this under-researched feature of social life. Attitudes which emerged from the experience of industrial illness were mediated by the close connection of home and work. Reactions to the potters' diseases ranged from the defensive to the aggressive. Some workers protested; many concentrated on the need to retain their job and avoid poverty, while others displayed grudging acceptance of an age-old and seemingly necessary evil. The issue of health was to prove a problem for the union, both in terms of its own internal relations but also during dealings with other social and political groups.

## CHAPTER 3

### Trade Unionism in the Pottery Industry

In this chapter the point of focus is trade unionism among the potters. Subsequent chapters will deal with the wider field of union activity. The concentration here is on the union's internal characteristics: its formation, structure and composition. The process of formation, set in context, was a major shaping influence. The origins of many of the paradoxes of union behaviour may be traced to the NAS's creation.<sup>1</sup> A trade union contains both formal and informal dimensions of organisation and action.<sup>2</sup> An analysis will follow of the union's official structure, as well as an examination of how the union operated over time and on a number of levels. Recent statements concerning the historical relationship of union leadership and the rank and file will be critically reviewed in the light of the potters' experience. The composition and social organisation of the union will be explored and the forms and meanings of union membership revealed. To what extent the union was a product of the workshop, the nature of their inter-relations and the reasons for the society's development and change are the preoccupations of this chapter.

#### 3.1 From Craft to Amalgamated Union

The formation of the National Amalgamated Society of Male and Female Pottery Workers (NAS) in 1906 and the subsequent realignment of trade unions in the pottery industry must be set in context. The amalgamation of a number of societies was not an isolated event; this decisive act

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1. See also J. Zeitlin, 'The emergence of shop steward organisation and job control in the British car industry: a review essay', History Workshop, No. 10, Autumn 1980, pp. 119-137, for an analysis of the origin of the engineering union and the role of craft groups.

2. For profitable uses of this perspective see R. Price, Masters, Unions and Men. Work Control in Building and the Rise of Labour 1830-1914 (Cambridge 1980), passim. H. Beynon, Working for Ford (Wakefield 1975) chapter six.

was the sequel to a train of events and must be set against the rich past experience of trade unionism in the industry. The formation of the NAS helped determine the future of both the trade union and labour movement in the Potteries. The explanations for that formative process, which covered the years 1900-1920, is embedded as much in the 19th as in the 20th century. Our interpretation is therefore based on an analysis of the long term as well as the more immediate contexts.

There was a mixture of union forms, membership, organisation and consciousness in the preceding century. The dominant form of unionism among the potters was the craft union. A range of unions resulted from the differing interests generated by the division of labour and each society served a specific craft or occupational group. Up to 20 different unions are identifiable. Each sub-industry produced its own union formation. The jiggerers in the china trade (320 in total), for example, had their own body separate from the jiggerers in other sub-industries. As craft unions, their membership size was quite small, based as they were on single occupations. On closer inspection two types of union can be seen. The first was composed of the larger, more powerful craft groups and their strength derived from the members' relation to the production process. The unions enjoyed a continuous existence. The second group was based on the smaller, skilled occupations; their potential membership was small and their presence highly unstable.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, chs. III & IV, especially p.57. S. Sentinel, 21 February and 19 July, 1901. Hanley Lodge book of the Hollow-Ware Pressers Union, 1855-1884 and the Burslem Lodge book, 1864-1890, H.E.L. Webb Trade Union Collection, Vol. XLIV, pp. 318-324, 342-344 and 396. Staffordshire Knot, 20 September 1890; 22 November 1890 and 3 January, 1891. For the importance of the craft union generally see H. Clegg, A. Fox and A.F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889, Vol. 1, chs. 1 & 4.



Outside the craft unions the vast majority of semi-skilled potters were almost completely unorganised. The hollow-ware pressers and other male craft unions did try to attract related semi-skilled workers during and around disputes yet they do not appear to have organised the unskilled assistants. Most women potters in the 19th century fell into this category except those organised by the printers' and transferrers' union from the late 1880s onward. The male unions combined, never had more than 400 women members. Major conflicts occurred in the potbank between male craftsmen and unskilled or semi-skilled female potters. The use of women as cheap labour by owners seriously threatened the job definition and status of the craftsmen. At most between 1870-1900, the number of unionised women potters amounted to barely 5% of the total female workforce.<sup>4</sup>

The craft consciousness of the male unions was clearly visible. As their rule books show each union developed around the maintenance and protection of craft privileges and controls. It was around the issues of apprenticeship, wage differentials and the influence of new technology on craft jobs that the disputes of 1879-1880, 1890-92 and 1899-1900 centred. The unions' actions betrayed their craft origins. One can detail repeated instances of bitter conflict between the unions and masters. However, there are examples of the strong sense of 'mutuality' (William Owen's word)<sup>4a</sup> which developed between craftsmen and owners. As one unionist stated: 'let honour be given where it is due. Union is not intended to harass those who righteously recognise labour's claims, but

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4. Webb Trade Union Collection, Vol. CIX., 'An Appeal to Hollow Ware Pressers' (n.d.) and Vol. XLIV, Item 3, p.310. R. Whipp, 'The Women Potters of Staffordshire', Ch. 5, pp. 96-107.

4a. William Owen, agent of the National Order of Potters (mainly flat pressers). Potteries Examiner, 22 Nov., 1879.

to build them up in their position'.<sup>5</sup> Printers and transferrers, and the hollow-ware pressers regularly had manufacturers as guests of honour at their annual union dinners. Some craftsmen were able to set themselves up in business, which led to their unions framing special rules to accommodate them. The persistence of mutuality and high levels of craft consciousness led some to view the potters' unions in the 1900s as 'a generation out of date'.<sup>6</sup> For us the craft ideology of the potters casts significant light on the nature of their eventual amalgamation. Each union's identity and relationship with the pottery owners was an independent one. Amalgamation was seen as threatening to weaken these bases of craft union strength.

The raison d'etre of the 19th century craft union was the perpetuation of the privileges of small, specialised sections of the workforce. Consequently the unions were narrow and sectional in their aims and actions down to 1900. Despite what we might see as the collective problems facing the mass of the potters, the craft groups seldom acted in concert. Industry-wide action and collective bargaining was never fully attempted. The major strikes and lock-outs illustrate the divisions within the potters' unions. In 1891 each craft group used the dispute over apprentices

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5. See above, Ch. 1. Royal Commission on Labour, Group C, Answers to Schedules of Questions, 1892, C.6795, pp. 70-71, 153-54, 230 & 232; Group C Rules of Employers and Employed, pp. 236-238. Rules of the China and Earthenware Gilders Union (Stoke 1890) Section 2; Rules of the Operative Cratemakers Society (Hanley 1890); Rules of the United Firemen and Kilnmen's Labour Protection Association (Hanley 1890); Rules of the Amalgamated Society of Hollow-Ware Pressers (Burslem 1890) and Rules of the National Order of Potters (Burslem 1891). Letter from E.B. to Workmen's Times, 28 October, 1890. For one of the most detailed studies of craft unionism (that is a society which only admitted craftsmen who had served or fulfilled the appropriate apprenticeship or entry qualifications as a means of protecting craft status) see T. Matsumura, 'The Flint Glass Makers', especially pp. 142 & 149 ff.

6. Staffordshire Knot, 1 February 1890. Workman's Times, 3 & 10 October, 1890. W. Owen, Potteries Examiner, 22 November, 1879. C. Bloor to the Hatherton Arbitration in S. Sentinel, 22 November, 1879, Lord Hatherton Papers SRO.0260.M/F/5/9. Report on Profit Sharing and Labour Co-Partnership in the United Kingdom (HMSO 1920) Cmd. 544, 'The Brownfield's Guild Pottery Society Ltd', a co-operative venture between pottery manufacturers and the National Order of Potters and the Hollow Ware Pressers Society from 1893 to 1896. See also R. Harrison, Before the Socialists (1965) ch.1 and T.R. Tholfsen, Working Class Radicalism in mid-Victorian England (1976).

to pursue their own sectional objectives. The same was true of the potters' famous arbitration board and hence its intermittent existence. This is not to deny that certain issues (particularly wage cuts) did produce a more widespread collective consciousness, as the events of 1881 and 1891 show. Even on these occasions the concentration of the craft societies on their particular interests undermined general solidarity. The stigma of defeat and the mutual recrimination which followed led the flat-pressers' rulebook to admit, that with regard to the 'history of union movements in the pottery trade ... sectional branches have not developed the necessary power'.<sup>7</sup>

Allied to the separatism of the craft unions was the high levels of autonomy within each society. Union size was relatively small (500 - 1400), administrative structures minimal and a large measure of discretion resided with the lodge or small groups of craftsmen. The secretary of the pressers proudly told the Hatherton arbitration in 1879 that, 'although they had a trade union they did not interfere with individual freedom'.<sup>8</sup> The printers saw no reason to develop a central bureaucracy since their members' industrial power on the potbank gave sufficient bargaining strength with the individual master. As late as 1900, the union's agent requested that the members 'settle in the full terms as set forth in the appeal, and where possible the agreement should be ratified by the officials of the society'. Among 400 potbanks and six townships the local lodge became the focal point of the craftsmen's

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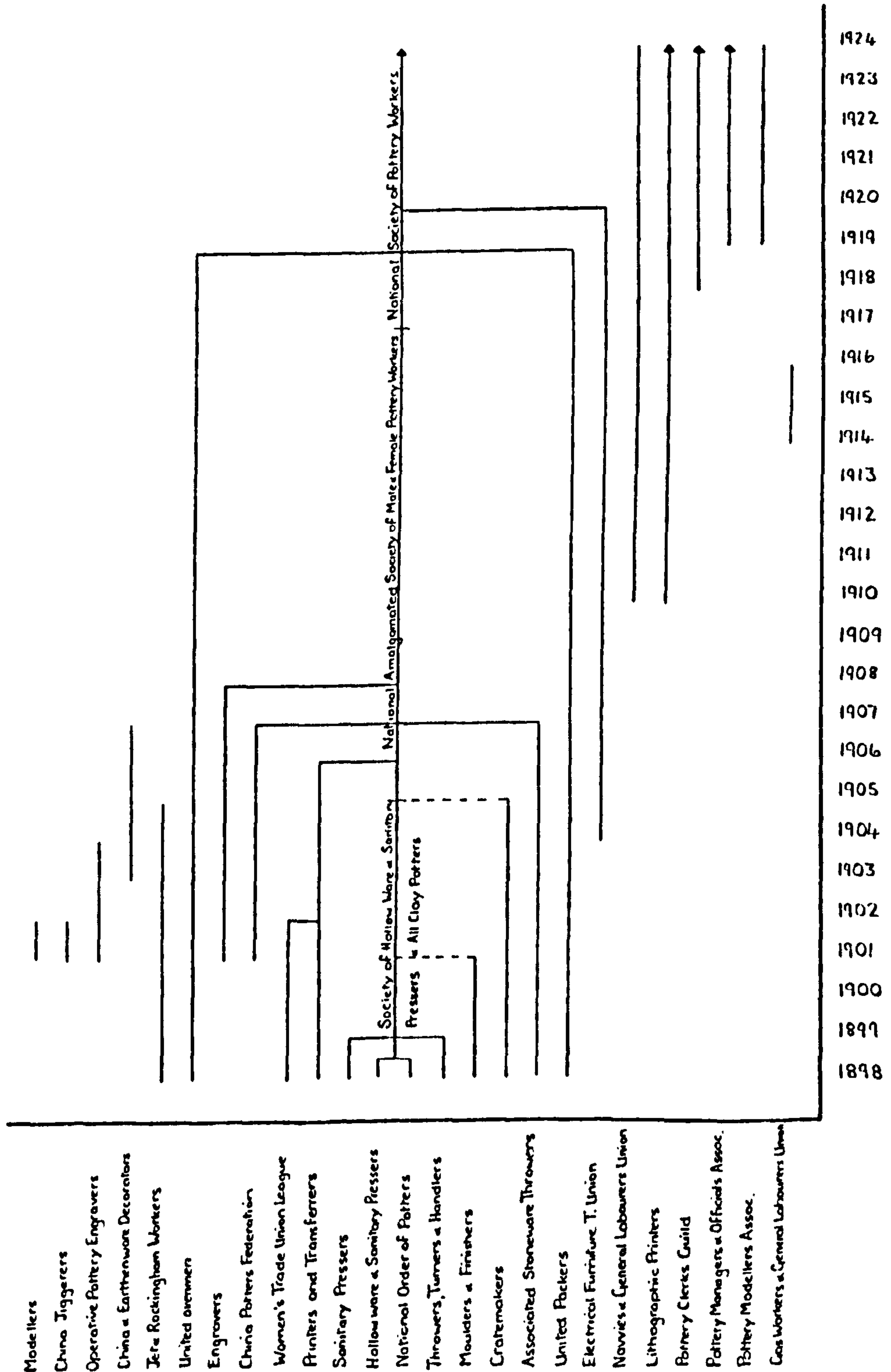
7. 'The Great Potters' Strike', Handbill, 6 December, 1881, MRC. 23/60/1/B/24/4. Workman's Times, 6 March, 1891. P. Gazette, 1 July and 1 August, 1891 and 2 May, 1892. Webb T.U. Collection, Vol. XLIV, pp. 175 and 278. Intro., National Order of Potters Rule Book (Burslem 1891).

8. Hatherton papers, Bloor, in S. Sentinel, 22 November, 1879.

Fig. 3

Trade Unions in the Pottery Industry 1898-1924

Sources: Annual Reports on Trade Unions 1900-1912. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation Mins. NEC mins, 14 May, 1917, 24 Jan. and 4 Dec. 1919. D36 Misc. Ledgers. L138 23 Feb., 1920. S. Sentinel, 21 Feb. & 19 July, 1901. P. Gazette, 1 Mar., 1910, p.314; 1 June, 1913, p.703; 1 Mar., 1914, p.331 & 1 Jan., 1918, p.60. 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, p.37. A dotted line indicates a transfer of members but no formal amalgamation.



organisation. Loyalty to lodge and neighbourhood was strong. Throughout the 19th century, unionism in the pottery industry was dominated by the large number of separate, small male craft unions. Their independent craft consciousness, their sectionalism and well developed internal autonomy militated against industry-wide combinations down to the 1900s.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, craft consciousness (in spite of the development of alternative attitudes) and its material base remained entrenched throughout our period. Clearly, any amalgamated or industrial union which might emerge among the potters, would be heavily influenced by the long-held status and power of the craftsmen. Indeed the continuing strength of the dippers, pressers, ovenmen, printers and placers would provide a central reference point for any future form of union organisation.

The period 1900-1920 was one of decisive change for trade unionism in the pottery industry. In 1899 almost 20 separate unions were officially recorded; by the end of the era one union, the National Society of Pottery Workers has emerged (see Fig. 3). Two main questions arise. It must be explained why trade unionism remained so sectional and diffuse. Secondly, the reasons for the amalgamations of the period must be uncovered.

The first question is best answered by using our insights into the fragmentation of the potters and the antagonism which characterised their internal social relations. Second, the changes in the production process noted in chapter 2 generated new union groupings. Thirdly, the role of unions from outside the Potteries added to the range of union

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9. Workman's Times, 3 & 10 October, 1890 and 30 January, 1891. Staffordshire Knot, 26 September, 1891. P. Gazette, 12 April, 1900, p.419.

forms in the industry. As Fig. 3 indicates, the pottery industry is a fine example of what Cole termed the 'mere chaos' and Clegg called 'the unparalleled complexity' of Britain's union structure.<sup>10</sup> The primary cause of this chaos in pottery was the rich variety of sub-industries, product types and job descriptions which continued to exist throughout the period. It was logical for potters to first organise the workers in their occupational group, their trade. We have noted the wide diversity of not only skills but customs, vocabulary, payment methods and trade pre-occupations. For example, the flat pressers, hollow-ware pressers and sanitary pressers were all pressers yet their skills, wages and hence their unions were widely dissimilar. Tensions between trades arose from the piece-work system and the irregular production process which reinforced the sectional groupings of unions around separate occupations. As the Webbs observed of British industry at this time, even within one trade 'there are often smaller circles of specialised classes of workmen, each sufficiently distinctive in character to claim separate consideration'.<sup>11</sup>

The major division in this fragmented picture was between the amalgamated society and the ovenmen's union. As their title suggests the 'United Ovenmen, Dippers, Placers, Firemen, Kilnmen and Saggarmakers Labour Protection Association' aimed to organise the skilled occupations in the firing process. The fundamental differences in work regimes between the potting/decorating shops and the ovens had always divided

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10. P. Latham, Rank and File Movements in Building 1910-1920. Our History series (1909) p.5. H. Clegg, The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain (Oxford 1979), p.164. In 1910 a third of all unions had less than 100 members.

11. Warburton, op.cit., p.187. S. & B. Webb, Industrial Democracy, p.109. A. Musson, Trade Unions and Social History (1974) p.5.

the potters at both the workplace and the union level. Firing faults led to regular inter workgroup disputes. Though small in number at around 500 members, the oven workers were pivotal by any definition and of immense significance to the course of industrial relations and conflict.<sup>12</sup> Past and present relations between the leaders of the ovenmen and the clay potters were fraught with difficulties. The open disputes and exchanges of insults enlivened successive episodes of the industry's history from the mid-19th to the early 20th century. 1908 was an especially bad year with a battle over the arbitration board followed closely by a clash regarding representation on the lead inquiry. Separate industrial action produced a reservoir of ill-feeling. The labour correspondent of the board of trade summarised the 1900 dispute of oven and other potters with remarkable understatement when he wrote: 'the requirements of the various sections were not uniform nor were they united in their action'.<sup>13</sup>

The variegated pattern of unionism in the pottery industry did not remain static. It was augmented by new creations around existing and emergent trades, which sought to protect themselves against changes in technology, management strategy and the action of other unions. The china and earthenware decorators formed a union distinct from the 'printers and transferrers and female decorators union' in 1903 since the older union was not meeting the decorators' needs. The 50 modellers in the industry formed an 'association' in April 1920, 'owing to the

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12. See above Ch. 2.1. P. Gazette, 1 September, 1908, p.1074.

13. CATU COLL, S. Clowes' scrapbook, S. Sentinel, 4 & 6 April, 1907. J.C. Wedgwood, Staffordshire Pottery, p.195. S. Advertiser, 22 February p.5 and 13 June, p.7, 1908. Reports on Strikes and Lock-Outs (1900) pp. 68-69.

modeller not having been treated on all fours (sic.) with other branches of pottery workers'. The modellers clearly felt they could represent their interests most effectively as an independent union. The same was true of the electrical turners who remained a separate society from 1905-1920. The development of new lithographic printing led to the creation of a union which served the lithographers' specific needs.<sup>14</sup>

Two important additions were the societies of the clerks and the supervisory staff. The clerks formed a 'guild' in January 1918, allied to the National Union of Clerks. The formation of the managers' and foremen's society is particularly interesting and illustrates our argument that the character of the division of labour and the changes which it underwent are the basic explanatory features of unionism in the pottery industry. As was suggested, although managers and foremen were appearing more frequently during the period,<sup>15</sup> their position on the potbank was very different from the usual role associated with supervisory staff. There was no neat distinction between worker and foreman. Many foremen or 'heads of departments' were senior craftsmen. The craftsmen owed allegiance to their craft union as the membership ledgers show. Only in 1919 was a separate 'pottery managers and officials association' formed after the manufacturers refused to recognise the NSPW as a bargaining representative of the supervisory grades. The position of the manager and the foreman in the workplace was well reflected in the uncertainty which surrounded their union form.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Labour Gazette, 1903, p.205 & 1918, p.425. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1920, p.541.

15. J. Melling, 'Non-commissioned officers: British employers and their supervisory workers, 1880-1920', Social History, May 1980, pp. 182-221. See also Meacham, A Class Apart, p.23, and R. Tawney, The Acquisitive Society (1921), p.203. for the argument that there were now 'clearer boundary lines' between higher ranks of the working class and the lower middle class in the workplace and in their unions. In the pottery industry the boundary lines were still quite blurred.

16. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1906, p.91 & 1 Jan., 1918 p.60 & 1 April, 1917 p.409. Minutes of NCPI, 7 March & 11 July, 1918. CATU COLL, N.E.C. Mins., 10 Jan., 1920 & L.156, W. Harvey to W. Tunncliffe, 15 Jan., 1920.



The activity of national unions added to the differentiation of union groups. The Workers' Union organised among the unskilled labourers. Some of the crate-makers, packers and coopers (many of whom now worked in specialist firms outside the potbank) were recruited by the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers. Tom Cusack of the Navvies' Union was especially energetic in bringing unionism to the local tile and brick workers, whose sub-industry had never enjoyed a close connection with the other sections. His efforts came to fruition during the 1910 and 1911 brick, tile and marl workers' strike.<sup>17</sup> Thereafter, joint action between the NAS and the Navvies' Union appears to have grown and become commonplace. The organisation of the unskilled, essentially auxiliary workers (what today might be called indirect workers) and those in the most distant sub-industry by national unions was quite logical. Given the background of the most powerful groups in the NAS and the difficulties experienced in bringing formal union membership to unskilled direct pottery workers, the NAS decided that the resources of the outside unions could be more appropriately used. Joint action with these external organisations was seen as a practical compromise.<sup>18</sup> For our purposes, the action of the national union put beside firstly, the already intricate mix of local combinations and secondly the growth of additional societies, explains the diverse pattern of unionism in the pottery industry.

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17. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1916, p.652. CATU COLL, L520, Mins. of meeting with NUEW, 17 Oct., 1921. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1910, p.314. T. Cusack, Brick, Tile and Marl Workers' Strike of 1911. How it was Fought and Won (Longton 1911).

18. CATU COLL, L77, Agreement between Wengers Ltd., NSPW and Navvies Union, 8 February 1919. L135, J. Castor, 9 January 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.R1.

The second problem remains: why did this heterogenous list of unions amalgamate in the 1900-1920 period? The answer lies in the following areas: the short-term experience and events concerning the potters' unions in the period 1890-1906; the pressures which faced all potters' unions during the first two decades of this century and finally a set of wider influences which affected many other industries at that time.

As Fig. 3 shows there were really two phases of amalgamation: the first around 1906-1908, the second between 1918-1920. Let us take the 1900s first. Once the pressers had united officially in one union in 1899 and demonstrated their ability to act cohesively they moved towards becoming a major force in the industry. Their sectional success during the conflict of 1899 and their actions during the difficult trading years around the turn of the century made the pressers a logical base for any further amalgamation. This episode of itself did not make new alliances more likely let alone inevitable, especially given the inhibiting factors outlined above. It was only the combination of long cherished designs for unionism by certain potters, with the lessons learnt during the 1892 and 1899 disputes which became acutely relevant when the TUC was held in the Potteries in 1905.

The significance of the attempts of various unions to unite in the later 19th century should not be underestimated. In 1882, 1892 and 1899 the feeling for wider union forms and the linking of the craft unions was apparent below the surface of industrial conflict. In 1881 an ad hoc federation was formed as also happened in 1891: both failed.<sup>19</sup>

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19. Handbill, 'The Great Potters Strike', 1881, 6 Dec., MRC, MS.28/CO/1/B/24/4. Webb T.U. Coll., Vol. XLIV, p. 278.

Many rank and file unionists thought that 'with their petty jealousies' gone and in 'a united society of potting' they could accomplish, it was said, more in six months than they had in as many years. Rank and file members seem to have been in favour of permanent federation; their leaders were apparently less keen. One potter went so far as to predict in December 1890 that 'all the branches are drawing closer together and it is now only a question of a short time before the societies, with scarcely one exception, will be united'. The disunity of the craft unions and the feuding between certain leaders during the 1891-1892 and 1899-1900 disputes was an object lesson for most potters. The 1900 disputes and the failure to win certain demands in a good trade year led Will Thorne to assert that the potters had 'too many unions and too little unity'. George Hassell, secretary of the pressers, was stung into 'recognising the lack of unity among the workers' and led him to draft an amalgamation scheme which all potters could support, in 1905.<sup>20</sup>

The short term determinants of the 1906-1908 phase of amalgamation sprang from the improved performance of the industry at that time and from the role of the TUC and General Federation of Trade Unions. The trade reports for this period show demand and employment was strong with overtime being worked. Exports were up from £195,852 in November 1905 to £230,020 for the same month in 1906. The success of the two sanitary pressers' disputes of those years was seen to have come from their increasing membership and funds. Joining the CFTU in 1903 was an expression of the pressers' society's strength. They thought themselves

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20. Workman's Times, 10 October, 1890; 27 February, 1891; 14 November, 1891 and 27 February, 1892. Staffordshire Knot, 18 April and 10 October, 1891. S. Advertiser, 2 September, 1905.

to be 'in a better position financially than ever before in the history of the society'.<sup>21</sup> The meetings and propaganda surrounding the 1905 TUC in Hanley were crucial in boosting the impetus for amalgamation. In particular the Women's Trade Union League forced home the need for combination among the male unions as a prerequisite for female union membership. Indeed it was the WTUL who brought the Printers, Ovenmen and Pressers together to consider the 'problem of female labour'. This resulted in first, a joint committee to co-ordinate a recruitment campaign among women and shortly after led to the formal merging of the Pressers and Printers and Transferrers societies.<sup>22</sup> In addition the issues and activity associated with the 1906 election assisted this amalgamation phase. It was noticed that the potters had 'been greatly influenced by the decision on the Taff Vale case' and that the Conservative Coghill blamed his defeat primarily on the issue of the 'trade union question'. The secretary of the North Staffordshire Labour Council, Noah Parkes (agent of the newly amalgamated union) declared at the annual meeting in February 1907 that the past year had shown 'the closest ever support and concerted actions of local unions'.<sup>23</sup>

In 1908 a number of unions still stood outside the NAS, most notably the ovenmen, packers and electrical furniture societies. However, a second phase of amalgamations occurred in 1917-1921, when these unions

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21. Labour Gazette, 1906, Reports on pottery. P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1906, p.1199. See Table 4. S. Sentinel, 25 March and 2 April, 1907. Financial Ledger of the National Order of Potters 1899-1906. T. Pickin, P. Gazette, 9 March, 1903, p.272.

22. TUC Meeting and Potteries History (1905), pp. 7-10. WTUL, Quarterly Report, January, 1903, p.37; January, 1905, p.29 and January 1906, pp. 16-17. S. Advertiser, 8 February, 1907, p.5.

23. S. Advertiser, 20 January, 1906, p.3; 21 April, p.5 and 2 February, 1907, p.5.

finally joined forces with the NAS. In spite of the basic cleavage on the potbank and at the union level from 1906 onwards the NAS clearly intended to win over the oven workers if not their leaders.<sup>24</sup> The strength of the intent is apparent in the remarks of Sam Clowes, at that time president of the NAS. He was reported as saying that:

they were determined that there should be only one society in the district, and they are prepared to do anything in their power to bring about a united society which was the only workable scheme for the Potteries district (Hear Hear). Whether Mr. Edwards [secretary of the Ovenmen] liked it or not, the day was near when there would only be one society for the whole district.<sup>25</sup>

The period 1906-1917 contained a number of events and changes within the pottery industry which facilitated the eventual amalgamations of 1917-1921. The timing of technological change was important. Whereas the pressers and printers had been undergoing progressive pressure on their job content from the late 1880s, the changes in oven technology only really emerged during and after the 1900s.<sup>26</sup> The death of the long-serving ovenmen's leader Thomas Edwards in 1911 proved to be an event of great moment. Edwards had, according to his obituary, always 'maintained the independence of the Ovenmen's Union, when it was in danger of being absorbed by the Potters' Union'. It was under William Callear, the new secretary, that a closer relationship between the ovenmen and NAS developed.<sup>27</sup> The 1913 industrial disputes saw practical co-operation among these workers and their unions leading to a joint committee of the

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24. See Fig. 3. S. Advertizer, 22 February, 1907, p.5; 1 February, p.7 & 22 February, 1908, p.5. CATU COLL, L328, letter of kilnman at Heron & Co., 2 May, 1912.

25. S. Sentinel, 4 April, 1907.

26. See Chapter 1.2.

27. P. Gazette, 1 January, 1911, p.89. CATU COLL, L284 March 1916 pay settlement.

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NAS, ovenmen and the packers being set up in June of that year.<sup>28</sup>

The 1913 committee's discussions failed to produce a formal merging of the societies. However, the events of the Great War provided a context which made amalgamation almost a necessity. Whereas fairly loose, ad hoc joint action between these unions had been sufficient in each of the disputes of 1911-1914, during the war this was no longer the case. Wage negotiations became almost continuous in the face of rapidly rising prices. Temporary bargaining arrangements solidified into something more permanent.<sup>29</sup> The increased scale of female employment, especially in oven work made a strong joint stance vital. A permanent joint union committee resulted leading to the establishment of local combined groups of ovenmen and other potters in each of the Six Towns. These groups held detailed negotiations with both manufacturers and government officials over a wide range of issues. The actions of certain owners during the 1916 pay dispute was fateful. The masters rejected a combined union approach. The result, said the local correspondent of the trade journal was that 'this reply caused the two societies of operatives to collaborate'.<sup>30</sup> Rank and file pressure for unity grew again in 1917 when more than one mass meeting saw references to the 'duplication of organisations'. It is interesting to track the feeling for amalgamation in the public meetings of 1916-1919 and the course of the private negotiations between the societies executives. The latter certainly appear to have been propelled by the former. The establishment of the National Council of

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28. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1913, p.703.

29. CATU COLL, L587, Joint committee of ovenmen and NAS, 18 Jan, 1916. P. Gazette, 1 July, p.696 and 1 Oct., 1916, p.425, also 1 July 1917, p.697.

30. Op.cit., 1 September, 1919, p.987.

the Pottery Industry in 1917 added greater pressure towards combination since one of the council's four principal requirements was the complete organisation of workers throughout the industry. When the manufacturers' associations combined to form the British Pottery Manufacturers Federation in 1918 the need for union amalgamation was overwhelming as the societies admitted. At this point, it was the relative success of the unions' joint action in the spring dispute which finally led to their formal joining.<sup>31</sup>

It is also possible to locate the amalgamation process of the potters' unions of the period in a wider national setting. Cole thought the era exhibited as strong a 'unity movement' as any of the previous century. The First World War was a time of greater common action among unions, even those who had shown few bases for unity in pre-war years. Permanent federations were created. The influence of national war time bargaining and the pressure on unions to become more representative was well reflected in the potters' case. Pottery manufacturers, in common with other industrialists, began to recognise the uses of more representative unions and the increased prospects for industrial peace if those unions could be committed to central arbitration and conciliation machinery.<sup>32</sup>

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31. CATU COLL, NEC Mins., 13 Feb., 21 April, 14 July & 29 Dec., 1917, 23 October, 1918, 24 January, 2 July and 30 Sept., 1919. Lawton Hall Conference, 1917, mins., section W. For the entry of the engravers see P. Gazette, 1 August, 1921, p.1244; for the electrical turners and throwers, L138, 15 December, 1919.

32. Cole, Organised Labour, pp. 77-83. The period saw the amalgamation of the Transport Workers; the N.U.R. in 1912, the British Iron and Steel Trades Association in 1917; the Union of Post Office Workers and the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers in 1920 and the Transport and General Workers Union in 1922. See also, S. Pollard, A History of Labour in Sheffield (Liverpool, 1959), p.217. Orton, Labour in Transition, p.163. R. Hyman, in C. Goodrich, The Frontier of Control (1920, 1975 edn), p.vii.

Apart from being influenced indirectly by the climate of opinion in the country, the NAS (as will be shown in chapter 5) had direct contacts and dialogues with other unions and groups throughout the period.<sup>33</sup>

The final amalgamation in 1919 might have been the end of a lengthy process extending over many decades: in effect it was just the beginning of the real integration of the potters' unions which took many further years.

### 3.2 Union Structure and Organisation

After the main amalgamation phase of 1899 to 1908 the NAS evolved a structure far more involved than anything the 19th century craft unions had produced. In the past the craft societies had relied on a relatively simple pattern of executive, secretary/agent and town-based lodges as befitted their average size of around 500 members.<sup>34</sup> Figure 4 is a diagrammatic representation of the official structure of the NAS from 1906-1924. It is necessary to stress that this is only a representation. The apparent symmetry of this framework both changed over time and in practice was highly malleable. The structure of the NAS was the product of an amalgam of forces. First, the influences of traditional craft loyalties and the existence of informal workplace groups were immensely strong. Second, how these craft and informal groups reacted to the events of the period was equally important to the evolution of the new union's form. The physical and social geography of the Six Towns also played a part.

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33. CATU COLL, L161, 1918 Inquiry into union constitutions, e.g. to N.U.R., 25 October, 1918.

34. Webb T.U. Coll. Vol. XLIV, Item 3, Hanley Lodge min. book of the hollow ware pressers, 1855-1884.



The Annual Delegation corresponded quite closely to the intentions of old craft unions' annual meetings but was more developed. In the 19th century the annual meeting was primarily for presenting accounts, reviewing the main policy areas and could easily be attended by the whole union membership. After amalgamation this was no longer possible. A more sophisticated representative body was required in order to embrace the expanded collection of lodges, trade and factory committees. A range of regulations was created for the standardisation of procedures in order to protect members' interests. Each annual meeting elected a president and vice-president who oversaw the working of the delegation and the national executive for the coming year. It was at the annual delegation that broad policy decisions and commitments were made. All lodges, district committees and executive members could lay down motions; voting was by district or lodge.<sup>35</sup> The delegation was, in those early days, of great symbolic value. For the first time the common problems of large areas of the industry were discussed. However the importance of this body should not be over-stressed. Certain administrative matters were often quickly decided on, whereas on specific issues the forum was less effective. Most of the positions adopted were very general as well as ambiguous.<sup>36</sup> It was really via the day-to-day implementation and interpretation of conference resolutions by the full-time officials and the trade committees that union policy took its final form.

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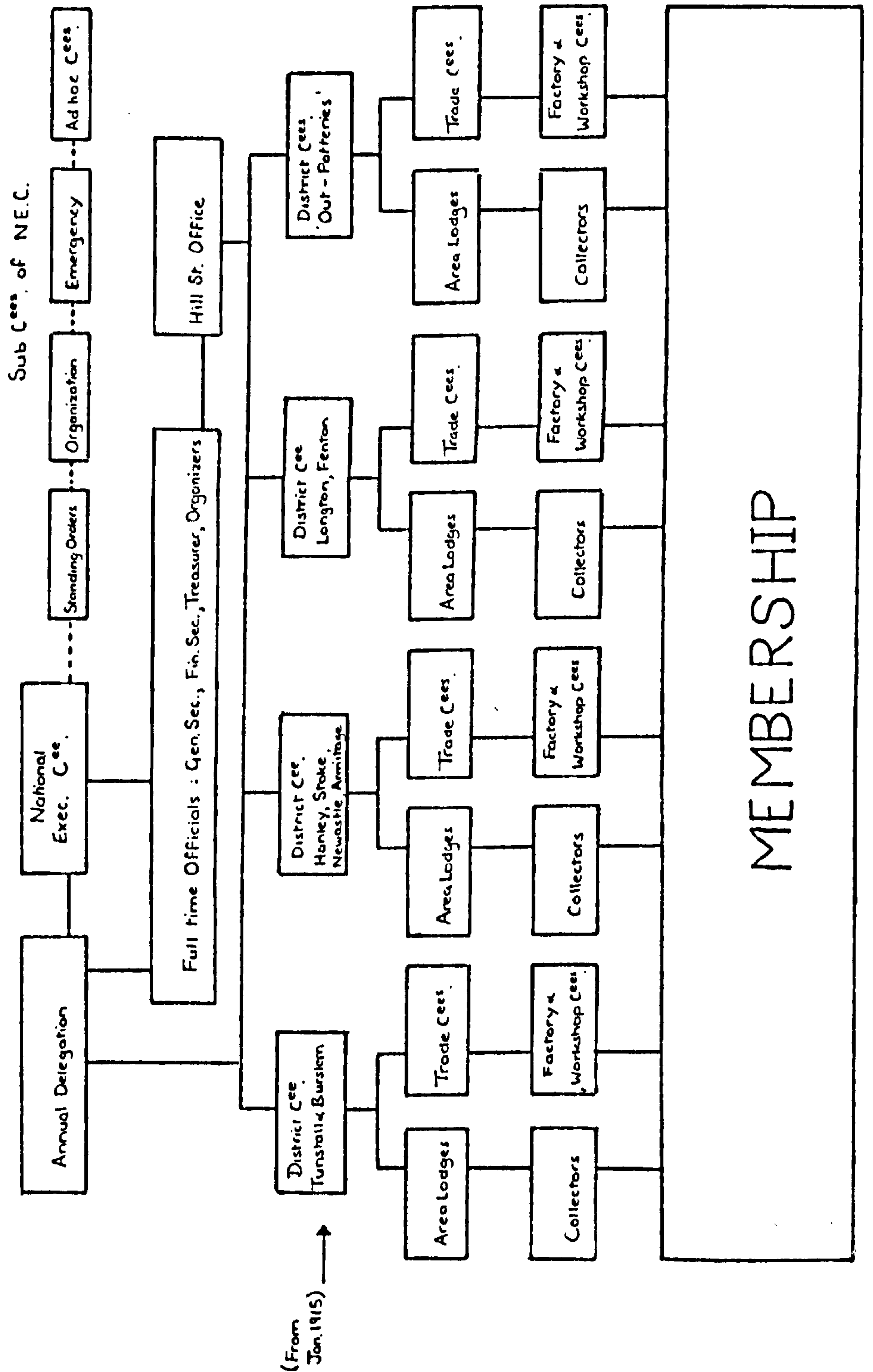
35. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation Minutes, 28 August, 1911, p.5. NEC mins. 12 January, 1918. D4, Ballot papers August 1917. L531, A. Hollins, 15 September, 1917, procedures for scrutineers. Cf. H. Clegg, General Union. A Study of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers (Oxford, 1954) p.57.

36. See CATU COLL, A. Delegation Reports and Minutes, 1911-1930.

Fig. 4

Structure of the NAS 1906-1924

Source: Reconstructed from CATU COLL, Annual Delegation Reports, Financial Ledgers, and correspondence from Lodge, Trade and Factory Committees. See especially A. Delegation Mins, 1913, p.31 and 1914, pp. 43-54.



The national executive committee (later called a council) and its sub-committees were made up of elected representatives from each district. By 1915 there were 17 members of the NEC including the president, his deputy, the full-time officials and three trustees of the union. In common with other unions, as Frederick Parkin put it, in 1915, 'the society shall be under the management and protection of the National Council', between annual delegations. The NEC processed and resolved most of the problems received from the trade committees, lodges and officials 'affecting the whole of the members of the society'. The district committees dealt only with their local matters. The NEC, especially after its expansion in 1914, became a powerful force within the unions. All 'official' policy was discussed ranging from basic administrative decisions and major disputes through to political issues. The executive directed the activity of the officials, initiated debate at the annual delegation as well as making recommendations to that conference. Formally, the NEC held authority over the lodges, district, trade and factory committees.<sup>37</sup> The careful balance maintained between the NEC and the annual delegation is shown by the executives' statement in 1918, that 'the NEC don't want to lay down any definite policy yet it is very desirous of giving a lead to the delegation which shall help delegates to arrive at a decision.'<sup>38</sup> The NEC became especially powerful after 1915 when permanent sub-committees were established to investigate the specialist areas of finance, organisation and 'emergencies'.<sup>39</sup>

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37. Op.Cit., A. Delegation Mins, 29 Aug. 1914 pp. 47 & 50. It was in 1915 that the NEC changed its name to a National Council, incorporating representation from the new districts, with 1 representative per 1000 members. General Secretary's report to the National Council, 30 January 1915. See NEC mins, 16 Dec. 1920 for authority of council over districts, lodges and other committees.

38. Op.cit., A. Delegation, 1918, p.84.

39. Op.cit., NEC Mins, 28 Oct., 1915. Standing orders C<sup>ee</sup>: A. Delegation, 1913, p.31, Finance, A. Delegation, 1915, p.50: Organization, NEC mins, 3 Oct., 1916; Appeals, NEC mins, 17 April, 1915. Ad hoc C<sup>ee</sup>, e.g. 'Casting', NEC mins, 2 Sept., 1916. See also Financial Ledger, Vol.2, 1909-1937.

District committees were established in January 1915. The reasons for their creation were two-fold. They were the product of the increase in membership, which led to far greater work loads for the NEC and lodges, allied with an increasing desire for wider representative forms within the union.<sup>40</sup> The society's membership was divided into four geographical areas. The lodges within that area elected annually a committee of seven. The district committees' function was to deal with issues which arose within their area. In particular, the committee acted as a court of appeal for lodge members; co-ordinated the work of the trade committees regarding changes in wage and employment conditions and was responsible for propaganda and organisation in the district. They were not given powers to vote money towards or to decide independently on 'general questions relating to strikes and lock-outs'. Instead they were supposed to process information concerning such activities to the NEC via the full-time union officials.<sup>41</sup>

The lodge had been the principal administrative unit of the individual craft unions and was retained by those societies when they amalgamated. It was accepted that the lodge 'should be the centre of trade union activity'. Most craft unions had one lodge per town. The NAS made direct use of some and merged others to give three in Burslem, three in Hanley, two in Tunstall, two in Longton, one in Fenton and one in Stoke. Lodges' duties included the collection of dues, the dispensing of benefits, the maintenance of membership registers. Lodge

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40. General Secretary's report to NEC, 30 January, 1915. A. Delegation, 1915, pp. 50-51.

41. NEC mins, 21 April, 1917 and 2 January, 1918.

officers were entrusted with raising members' questions and problems with national officials and the higher committees.<sup>42</sup> Working alongside the lodges were the trade and factory committees. The lodges were geographically based and dealt with administrative matters while the trade and factory committees were responsible for representing the detailed interests of the workers in individual occupations/'trades' or in a sub-industry. The importance of the trade committees was demonstrated during the formation of the district committees. It was carried unanimously that the new bodies should be modelled 'on the same lines as the China, Sanitary, Jet and Rockingham and Stoneware Trade Committees, as the exigencies of the trade demand'. The factory and workshop committees did not fit easily into the official structure of the union. These were the temporary, self-sustained inventions of small groups of workers in one potbank or workshop. Their immediate concerns were factory based and their basis and actions were often unofficial.<sup>43</sup>

The picture presented of the union's structure has been, of necessity, institutional and static. As a preliminary step the focus was directed at the official shape and the nominal structure of the union. In order to understand how the union operated in practice and why it developed in a particular way, a more flexible approach is necessary. The sections of the union functioned in different contexts

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42. A. Delegation, 1914, p.44. Until 1914 the sanitary pressers and mould makers had separate trade based lodges, financial ledger Vol. I, 1909-1914 and P. Gazette, 1 September, 1897, p.1180. NSPW, Reconstruction, p.30ff. NEC mins 25 November, 1919 and 27 October, 1927. L25, J. Cornwall, Lodge secretary to central office, 29 December, 1908. Cf. Musson, Trade Union and Social History, p.6. H. Francis & D. Smith, The Fed. A History of the South Wales Miners in the 20th Century (1980), p.4.

43. A. Delegation, 1915, p.57. NEC mins, 30 May, 1918, emergency c<sup>ee</sup>. mins. Cf. W. Milne-Bailey, Trade Union Documents (1929), p.101, for the trade c<sup>ees</sup> of the TCWU.

and underwent a number of changes. The distinction is between the image presented by the protocols of union conferences and the practical, everyday behaviour of officials and members. As H.A. Turner pointed out: 'in every institution, the structure's actual working, in terms of the relationship between its constituents and members, is as important as the formal rules that guide it'. In common with other unions, the potters also faced the central problem of how to convert the spontaneous, actions of an heterogenous mass of workers into permanent organisation.<sup>44</sup>

After amalgamating in 1906 the potters' union became progressively more centralised. The combined forces making for greater standardization and conformity were formidable. Leaders saw that as the union increased in size, co-ordination of the various segments became vital if a unified approach was to emerge. If the union was to fulfill its basic obligations regarding funding and benefits, centralization was an agreed prerequisite. The commitments involved in the national insurance and unemployment acts, the political fund, the monies spent on cases of industrial disease and the many short-term funding operations, all produced a far greater administrative workload than under the craft union. The financial basis of the union and the co-ordination of the accumulated rules, contributions and benefits was a major problem. Moreover, for trade unions, money was a traditionally sensitive issue and the potters' were no exception. The demand for monetary accountability

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44. H.A. Turner, Trade Union Structure Growth and Policy (1962) p.270. A. Flanders, Management and Unions (1970), pp. 38-47. S. & B. Webb, Industrial Democracy, p.145.

was strong. Weekly, monthly and annual balances and accounts were kept by both lodge and central office. Even so, in common with others, the NAS's accounts were continually found to be 'unsound' given their precious actuarial basis, as the deficits of 1908-1909, 1912, 1914 and 1921 showed.<sup>45</sup>

The Webbs felt that centralisation was necessary for effectiveness: in their words 'the growth of national trade unions involves, for strategic and what may be called military reasons, the reduction of local autonomy to a minimum, and the complete centralisation of all financial and of all executive government'.<sup>46</sup> However, workers themselves could also press for centralisation. In the NAS some of the craft based lodges and trade committees were inappropriate to the needs of many of the semi and unskilled who joined the union after 1906. The creation of the district committees and the widening of the NEC to a larger council in 1915 were the clear attempts to create a geographically based representation. It was hoped that this arrangement would eliminate some of the inequalities of power and influence inherited from the craft institutions. As the secretary, Joseph Lovatt admitted, 'this important change in the system of government' was 'in accordance with a general desire to act on more democratic lines ... making it more representative of the whole of the members'.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, the union became aware of the changes in

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45. A. Delegation, p.26. NEC mins, 14 May & 5 Nov., 1917, also 22 July, 1922. Finance C<sup>ee</sup> mins, 9 Sept., 1920. Cf. Cole, British Trade Unionism Today (1939) p.195. Parkin, Autobiography of a Trade Unionist, p.xv. A. Delegation, 1914 pp. 46-47 (40% of income was spent on administration). Reports of the finance c<sup>ee</sup>, 27 March, 1915 and 30 May, 1919. Financial ledger Vol. I, p.15. D.32, specimen lodge weekly balance sheet. cf. Turner, Trade Union Structure, p.208. Clegg, General Union, p.88.

46. Webbs, Industrial Democracy, p.138.

47. J. Lovatt to NEC mins, 30 January 1915. L782, letter of Ben Tillet to S. Clowes, 25 October, 1918.

structure being carried out by other unions: a survey of the major national unions organisation was made by the NAS in 1917. Furthermore, pressure was generated by the increase in collective organisation by the manufacturers and the trend toward industry-wide bargaining forms from 1910 onwards. Union leaders argued for a more concentrated structure and mode of decision making to match the trends in industrial negotiations and agreements.<sup>48</sup>

An examination of the continuous operation of the central office, lodges, collectors, trade or factory committees and activities of both union members and officials makes their significance and inter-relations clear. It can show the circumstances in which they operated and may determine how the potters managed to convert 'movement into organisation'. The union contained forces making for centralisation and non-conformity; elements of upward as well as downward control co-existed.

The central office is a good example of how the union's institutions reflected both the changes and continuities the membership required. Under the craft unions, the upstairs rooms of pubs sufficed. Early on, Joseph Lovatt's front room served the purpose for the NAS.<sup>49</sup> In 1908 a set of offices was built in Hill Street, Hanley to cope with the union's increased activity and processing of information. However, the offices were not purely an administrative unit; they continued to be regarded by potters as a social and advice centre. Union rules stipulated that the general secretary had to live there so that he would be personally

48. CATU COLL, L161, the survey covered at least 20 national unions with a 15 point questionnaire. The main concern of the questions is the degree and means of centralisation. The unions surveyed included those from engineering, textiles, shipbuilding, boot and shoe and vehicles. Cf. Pollard, Labour in Sheffield, p.238, for the parallel centralisation in industry and unions. Price, Masters, Unions and Men, pp. 116-124. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, History of Trade Unions, Vol. I, p.426. A. Fox, A History of the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, 1874-1957 (Oxford 1958)p.253.

49. Potteries Examiner, 17 March, 1879. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1908, p.93. Parkin, Autobiography of a Trade Unionist, p.xix.



available to help members who called. The office was located in a residential street, not a commercial area: open access was important. Sam Clowes' daughter remembered vividly how her father 'brought workers and their problems back home'. During major strikes and periods of high unemployment, as in the 1921 coal strike, the Hill Street 'shop' directed action, paid out benefit and advised members. As with the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, the office played a very practical and 'domestic' role.<sup>50</sup>

Nowhere was the social basis of union organisation more visible than in the lodges. The lodges provided a link in organisation between the craft union and the amalgamated society. Loyalty to the lodge was intense and always had been due to their localised constituency and support. During disputes the lodge helped mobilise action and opinion. For example, in May 1923 Longton lodge directed the 1,000 members involved in the Cartwright and Edwards dispute. Though bound by the union's official administrative rules and requirements the lodges exercised a good deal of discretion and independence. In January 1909, one lodge held a concert, given by its own choir, 'devoted to helping a number of working potters who, through no fault of their own but largely', it was said, 'owing to the introduction of new processes of manufacture' were unemployed. Lodges were often based at workmen's clubs which is indicative of how close they remained to their social base. Rambles, day-trips and 'entertainments' punctuated the lodges' year. The Albany

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50. P. Gazette, 1 January, 1908, p.86 and 1 October, 1921, p.1512. Interview with Mrs. D. Robinson. A. Delegation 1918, p.91. Cf. Clegg, General Union, pp. 67-78.

Glee Club was an important feature of lodge life in the Fenton and Longton lodges.<sup>51</sup> The appearance of equality in lodge size and influence given in Fig. 4 is not accurate. A lodge's status within the union was related to its size, past activity and the ability of its officials. Burslem and Hanley were always the strongest. In 1899 their membership was almost double Tunstall's and 15 times the size of Longton and Stoke. They were regarded as 'the strongholds' of the potters' union. Lodge secretaries built up large banks of knowledge and expertise on local issues.<sup>52</sup> Their influence on the day to day running of the union led to a continual tension between the larger lodges especially and the NEC over autonomy of action.

The collectors and canvassers system has remained unrecorded and yet it proved to be one of the reasons why the union successfully translated 'movement into organisation'. The collectors were a response to the large informal union membership as the president admitted at the 1917 annual delegation. A lodge's jurisdiction was divided into areas with a collector responsible for each. Longton lodge, for example, had 23 areas, covering 203 streets with a collector for every group of ten streets. His or her job was to visit each member or family at home, weekly, in order to collect subscriptions, pay out certain benefits and initially deal with any member's problems. The collectors were of

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51. Francis and Smith, The Fed, p.4 for the similar role of lodges among the South Wales miners. CATU COLL, NEC mins., 6 March, 1915 and L109, Lovatt personal memo (n.d. 1919?) re lodges. NEC mins., 11 June, 1920. L430, J. Mattock, 23 April, 1914. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1909, p.214 and 1 June, 1921, p.1100. S. Advertizer, 8 February, 1908 p.5. D.11. 1 July, 1914, notice of lodge meetings of Fenton and Longton in working men's clubs.

52. Financial Ledgers, lodge returns 1909. ff and Membership Ledgers for Tunstall, Burslem, Hanley, Stoke, Fenton and Longton. NEC mins., 20 March, 1920.

immense significance to successful maintenance of the fabric of union membership. They were the means of organising workers when manufacturers refused to allow unionists on their potbanks.<sup>53</sup> The collectors were able to individually process a diversity of problems for the individual member or their families. A collector lived in his 'area' and could respond quickly to calls for help. J. Elliott intervened in 1924 on behalf of a group of girls in Normancot after, to use his words, 'the master told the girls over a settlement that he would send for the union himself, as he could get better terms for them, which was a lie and he deliberately robbed them'. The collector proved to be a remarkably efficient means of exchanging views and information between members and officials, as the union's response to the groundswell against non-union labour in the early 1920s showed. Also, the collecting system was a key means of creating an industrial union. The collectors were based on areas and not trades or occupations. They were crucial to the union's ability to accommodate the wide range of occupations and sectional interest which emanated from the workplace.<sup>54</sup>

The trade and factory committees were not administrative blocks within the union but a direct product of potters and their workplace relations. They are not easily defined. Some were of years standing,

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53. Subscription C<sup>ee</sup>. mins., 28 October, 1915. NEC mins., 3 October, 1916. D48, collectors list 22 August, 1928. D.40 William Broad's collector's book. Longton membership ledger, notes inside front cover.

54. NEC mins., 21 November 1918. L30 Collectors' Survey of 1924. L142 letter of Lovatt (n.d.) to C. Eardley re 'out of work' dispute. For variants of the collector's system see Walker, *Juteopolis*, pp. 204 and 209. Fox, *Boot and Shoe Operatives*, p.241. Drake, *Women in Trade Unions*, p.219. For the role of collectors in working class street culture in general see R. Roberts, *The Classic Slum. Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Manchester 1971), p.65 and Young & Wilmot, *Family and Kinship in East London*, p.109.

others lasted for only the duration of a dispute or period of change. The factory and workshop committees were the spontaneous creation of working potters, not of the union leadership: the union hierarchy were forced to recognise them as 'the direct representations of the trade'. They were concerned with the problems which arose from the nature of work content, payment and factory discipline. In a period of technological change and shifting managerial strategy these committees varied enormously. A number generated their own funds and records, while others were convened on an ad hoc basis as needs arose. The larger trade committees covered the workers in an entire sub-industry; smaller trade committees represented a single occupation such as the china painters. The factory bodies, who often sent representatives to the trade committees, were formed by all or part of the workers on a potbank. Their coverage of the industry was patchy, reflecting the differing traditions, circumstances and power within the potters. No full-time official could assimilate the diversity of ware type, size and price in just one trade: he had to rely on the relevant committee. Certain committees became immensely powerful such as the sanitary or mouldmakers given their members wages or status on the potbank and the performance of their sub-industry.<sup>55</sup> The array of committees and the considerable autonomy and influence of some was partly responsible for the increased pressure greater centralisation after 1911. However, whilst the leadership and executive attempted to unify the actions of the trade and factory

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55. NEC mins., 30 May, 1918 and 13 September, 1920. L447, W. Rhodes to S. Clowes, 1 January, 1920. P. Gazette, 1 November, 1911, p.1263.

committees, the forces which created these committees were pulling in the opposite direction.<sup>56</sup> The widely differing contexts in which they operated meant that as a united, centralised organisation the growing union was being continually tested and put under strain.

Fig. 4's diagrammatic form also fails to show the wealth of union activity outside the formal lodges and committees. These activities were as relevant to the maintenance of union organisation as its more publicised, official layers. At a very simple level, badges became popular among the 'jet and rock' workers in the 1900s for drawing attention to non-unionists. The device was adopted by the executive as union policy in 1911. 'Show card days' and 'window-card weeks' were used to drive the message into the neighbourhood concerning local membership drives or disputes. Home-made handbills were a standard means of workers in one factory or workshop spreading information about their actions, especially during disputes. Much of this type of informal activity has gone unchronicled. The impact of these actions was demonstrated by the manufacturer who took the trouble to prosecute those workers involved in distributing handbills concerning his wages in 1917.<sup>57</sup> The union might hold mass meetings or 'annual demonstrations' at the Victoria Hall, Hanley but these were underpinned by the dozens of smaller meetings or demonstrations which were regularly held within the neighbourhoods of the Six Towns. The strength and persistence of these organic features of union activity were eventually recognised by the union

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56. NEC mins., 21 November 1918 for the attempt to centralise the trade c<sup>ees</sup>. regulate their representation on the district c<sup>ees</sup>. to four representatives per trade c<sup>ee</sup>. and for all accounts to be forwarded to the district c<sup>ees</sup>. and central office.

57. A. Delegation, 1911, p.12. Interview with W. Bennett. D.46, a small 'day book' of 'a day potter' for details of handbills and posters. Financial Ledger II, entries for poster costs. See the case of libel brought by Gaskell & Crowtt at Stafford Assizes, P. Gazette, 1 March, 1917, p.268.

Table 12Leadership of the Potters' Union

Source: CATU COLL, Annual Delegation Reports. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1906, pp. 82 & 93; 1 Aug., 1910, p.920; 1 May, 1919, p.504 and 1 May, 1922, p.706. S. Sentinel, 26 March, 1928. Labour Party Annual Reports, 1905-1924, NSPW returns.

NAME	POSITION	OCCUPATION	ADDRESS
William Pickin	Secretary (Hollow Ware Pressers to 1906).	Hollow ware presser	Wellington Rd, Hanley.
Joseph Lovatt	General Secretary (N.A.S) to 1917	Sanitary presser	Gilman St, Hanley.
North Parkes	Organiser (N.A.S) to 1910 ex Printers & Transferrers Union	Printer	Slater St, Burslem.
Sam Clowes	Organiser, Gen. Secretary (N.A.S) 1918-28.	Sanitary presser (Howsons)	Wellington Rd, Hanley.
Arthur Hollins	Organiser (N.A.S.), Financial Secretary	Hollow ware presser (Gibsons)	Hanley Rd, Hanley
Jabez Booth	Organiser (N.A.S)	Hollow ware presser (Meakins, Grindleys)	Lorne St, Hanley.
Job Wilcox	Treasurer (N.A.S.)	Presser	Slater St, Burslem
William Aucock	Organiser (N.A.S) 1921ff.		Leonard St, Burslem
William Machin	Vice President (N.A.S) 1918	Hollow ware jiggerer (Middleport)	Jackfield St, Burslem
Thomas Coxon	President (N.A.S) 1910	Presser	Lichfield St, Hanley
William Tunnicliffe	Organiser (N.A.S) 1920ff.	China Presser	Carron St, Fenton.
William Callear	Organiser (N.A.S) 1920ff ex Ovenmen's Union.	Fireman	King St, Tunstall.
Thomas Edwards	Secretary Ovenmen to 1911	Fireman	Leek Rd, Burslem.

executive: district committees were made responsible for helping to co-ordinate and finance them.<sup>58</sup>

An explanation of the working organisation of a union must obviously pay attention to its leadership. The NAS's officials were at the heart of the society's formal, and even its informal activities, to a limited degree. They were often the meeting point for the opposing pressures for centralised or local control and played a mediating role between the sections of the union. The leaders brought their own characteristics and backgrounds to their jobs. Their actions were however, constrained by the limitations the union imposed upon them and as individuals they were moulded by the problems and events which faced them. The point of convergence for the institutional union histories and the proponents of the 'incorporation thesis' is the relevance they ascribe to leadership.<sup>59</sup>

The leaders of the NAS were given a controlled degree of power by the constitution after being elected by a ballot of all members. The general and financial secretaries along with the organisers had permanent posts. They were directly answerable to the NEC and the annual conference, and could be dismissed by ballot of the members.<sup>60</sup> Within these constraints, the duties of the officials combined with the relationships they developed throughout the union, meant that they accumulated considerable power. The secretaries and organisers attended all NEC meetings and many district, trade and lodge gatherings. Their job

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58. Op.cit., 1 February, 1908, p.210. These included house meetings, street gatherings, picnics and dances, see WTUL, Quarterly Review, October, 1894, p.8 and Jan., 1897, p.16; L159, Mrs. Higgins (n.d.) and L457, Arthur Lees, 1920. Cf. Liddington & Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us, pp. 41, 106-109, 128, 132-135 & 162.

59. Cf. F. Burchill & R. Ross, A History of the Potters' Union (Hanley 1977). K. Burgess, The Origins of British Industrial Relations (1975) p.309.

60. A. Delegation, 1918, p.82. NEC. mins., 13 April, 1918.

required that they were conversant with a wide yet detailed knowledge of not only union practices but the current work process, prices, sizes, counts and wage rates across the industry. Any secretary who couldn't give the price and count on, for example, a '6 inch cast breakfast' at Woods was an impostor.<sup>61</sup> A request from Tom Wikin regarding an 'oceanic' mould shape price shift over two years, for dinner and toilet ware on January 5, 1909 to Joseph Lovatt, assumed the secretaries competence to answer. The officials had to be experts.<sup>62</sup> Yet despite their expertise the influence of the leaders varied according to which section of the union they were dealing with. Compare how the general secretary nursed the inexperienced lithographers of Myott's through two months of negotiations over apprentice ratios in 1912; bringing them to his office to coach them on tactics and telling them to let him do the talking since, as he told them, 'a still tongue makes a wise head'. Whereas the trade committees, at most, were prepared to use full-time officials only as advisers: the craftsmen's specific knowledge of their case could seldom be matched. Often the official found himself caught between manufacturer and worker in these cases. Indeed the officials could not ignore the response of any members to their actions. In the early 1920s, 12.63% of a collector's membership search left the union because of dissatisfaction at the way officials had treated them.<sup>63</sup>

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61. The ledger and notebooks of the union were remarkable compilations of data. Records were kept of the main occupations and their job description, price levels, count rates, covering the whole industry. L160, detailed comparison of Johnson's and Myotts count and ware sizes for March, 1920.

62. L124, 31 Dec., 1919. J. Booth's Notebook, 1907 entries have 40 sub-headings for counts. L422 T. Wilson to J. Lovatt, 5 Jan., 1909. D.47, Hollow-ware jiggerers file lists prices and counts for 88 ware types for Nov. 1919. The sanitary file for Johnson and Howsons has 73 price schedules for closets alone. Cf. Turner, Trade Union Structure, p.218 and Webbs, Industrial Democracy, p.183. J.R. Clynes, Memoirs 1869-1937, p.256, as quoted in V. Allen, Power in Trade Unions. A Study of their Organisation in Great Britain (1954) p.190.

63. L.484, Note to 'Myott's Lithographers' from Lovatt, 16 Dec., 1912 and L488, Lovatt to Myott & Son, 11 Nov., 1912. L.125, S. Clowes to J. Barker, labourer, 12 Jan., 1920. L321, W. Bird to J. Lovatt, 4 June, 1912. L30, Union membership survey 1924.



The potters' leaders brought two sets of characteristics to their job: the individual and the collective. From 1900, a new generation of union officials emerged. The foundation of the NAS coincided with the death of Thomas Pickin, long serving secretary of the hollow-ware pressers and the retirement of Joseph Hassall, their agent. Joseph Lovatt and Jabez Booth were completely new appointments as general secretary and organiser respectively of the NAS in 1906. Sam Clowes became president in 1907, his first union position, and only became a full-time organiser in 1909. Arthur Hollins, described as 'the alert, young Assistant Secretary' took office in 1910. Only Noah Parkes had previously been a union official, a secretary of the Printers and Transferrers Society.<sup>64</sup> Therefore, all the full-time officials came to their jobs a-new and were able largely to construct their roles from scratch. Their lack of in-grown attitudes and habits was noted and is one of the reasons why the union was able to cohere the mixture of trades and groupings within one organisation. The friendship of Clowes with Callear of the ovenmen is a case in point.<sup>65</sup> The other notable feature of the new leaders was their occupational and residence patterns. As Table 12 shows, they were mainly craftsmen 'makers' or pressers. Secondly, except for the organiser responsible for Longton, virtually all of them came from Hanley or Burslem, the central area of the Potteries and where the bulk of the membership was concentrated. Both these features were to influence union policy and action. Thirdly, the stability of the officials is remarkable.

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64. Financial Ledger I, 1 January, 1906. P. Gazette, 1 January, 1908, pp. 82 & 93; 1 August, 1910, p.920 and 1 September, 1911, p.1016.

65. Interview with D. Robinson. P. Gazette, 1 December, 1908, p.1397. Cf. Cronin, Industrial Conflict, p.66. Fox, Boot and Shoe Operatives, p.330.

Even the annually elected officers show a marked degree of permanence with only 12 people occupying the 42 possible positions between 1907 and 1928. Leadership crises do not appear to have figured in the union's development.<sup>66</sup>

It was the individual personalities and backgrounds of the leaders which help explain the evolution of the union at such a critical stage and also qualifies the collective picture of a narrowly based and unchanging group. Arthur Hollins was austere and 'very academic'. As financial secretary he appears to have been the necessary counter-balance to the more extrovert general secretaries.<sup>67</sup> In contrast Joseph Lovatt and Sam Clowes were sanitary, not hollow-ware pressers, who were proved in the fire of the sanitary disputes of the 1900s. Lovatt's character as general secretary was shaped by his experience of addressing mass demonstrations in the 1907 sanitary dispute and observing the evil of large-scale unemployment around 1908. He honed his renowned negotiating sharpness during the arbitration of 1908-1911 leading a manufacturer to remark on his 'considerable skill in cross-examination'.<sup>68</sup>

Sam Clowes and Jabez Booth had different skills. Clowes, organiser from 1909-1918 and general secretary from 1918-1928 stands out as a man of singular traits. His special hallmark was the ability to communicate with all sections and levels of the membership. He won widespread acclaim amongst skilled and unskilled alike for the public stances he took against masters. Organising work in Longton and the out-potteries won him many

66. The officials of the NSPW for the period 1906-1930 were reconstructed from the A. Delegation and NEC mins., making a total of 194 possible officials posts. There were disagreements but no crisis over the departure of Lovatt in 1918, see A. Delegation, 1918-1919, pp. 80-101.

67. Improperly Pugged Clay, p.17. L545, A. Hollins to W. Tunncliffe (n.d.) P. Gazette, 1 September, 1911, p.1016.

68. S. Clowes scrapbook, entries for 25 & 30 March, 1907. P. Gazette, 1 Octo., 1908, p.1186 and 1 Sept., 1910, p.1044. Cf. Walker, Juteopolis, p.203 for a useful discussion of the variants of union leadership styles.

future allies. Apparently he had the gift of being able to explain the technicalities of the industry 'with the simplicity of a child'. As an organiser he learnt platform techniques and style. In 1907 he was speaking on waste ground in Fenton. As he drew to a close at 9.30 p.m. he saw that the lights were on in a nearby 'bank. He quickly used the light in the window as a motif around which he constructed a final blistering attack on owners who abused labour. A neat turn of phrase and a telling use of imagery distinguished his speeches. Clowes attacked manufacturers who refused to make up workers to journeymen and employed 'apprentices as grey as myself' (he had striking white hair). On the problems of lead poisoning he spoke of how 'once a man was certified as suffering from plumbism he might as well be branded on the forehead'. His long-held advocacy of industrial unionism which included women and young potters, learnt from his time in organising the china trade, made him especially popular with a very broad range of workers.<sup>69</sup> Jabez Booth, organiser from 1906-1918, built his reputation by organising the unorganisable in the 'jigsaw puzzle' of the jet and rockingham trade. While Hollins, Clowes and Lovatt excelled in the formal negotiating forum, Booth was a prime example of the local, small-scale bargainer and union agent. Angered by the managerial onslaught on his hollow-ware presser's craft, employed by one of the toughest firms in the Potteries (Grindley's was once described as 'not having a trade unionist on the place'), Booth was engaged in the guerilla war of small potbank conflict

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69. Interviews with D. Robinson and R. Gibbon. Parkin, *Autobiography of a Trade Unionist*, p.xix. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.67. S. Sentinel, 6 April, 1907 and 26 March, 1928. S. Clowes scrapbook, 6 April, 1907. P. Gazette, 1 October, 1918, p.799 and 1 December, 1924, p.2022. S. Advertizer, 25 January and 1 February, 1908.

and bargaining for nearly 20 years. His tactical skills and knowledge bore fruit in the wider negotiating machinery which developed after the Great War.<sup>70</sup>

A view current in the historiography would predict that the full-time officials life-style became distinguished from that of the average worker's. Union leaders were, it is said, 'reluctant advocates of rank and file grievances after a period in office'. The isolation of the union official made him vulnerable to the prevailing ideology of employers. According to Burgess, 'instances of "incorporation" are legion'.<sup>71</sup> In the case of the potters, the argument does not hold. Firstly, there was no great jump in income for the officials, although their job was much more secure.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, we have already shown how the jobs of secretary and organiser were founded on accessibility and intimate knowledge of the industry's continuing operation. Even after bargaining became more formalised, the officials still dealt with factory and trade groups. There were dangers within the job of leadership. Clearly the union officer's expertise and range of contacts set him or her apart from the potter at the bench. As a negotiator the official necessarily had to deliver his part of an agreement. It was only human that Clowes or Lovatt, caught sometimes between masters and workers aspirations, fought for their own judgement. The leaders' self-image

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70. P. Gazette, 1 January 1906, p.93 and 1 December, 1908, p.1397 & 1 March, 1918, p.235. S. Clowes scrapbook, 4 April, 1907.

71. Burgess, British Industrial Relations, p.309. H.F. Moorhouse, 'The Marxist theory of the labour aristocracy', Social History, Vol. 3, No. 1, January 1978, p.61ff.

72. A. Delegation, 1911, p.7. The general secretary and organisers salaries were between £2.2s and £2. 5s which made them equivalent to an ovenman or sanitary presser. Op.cit., 1917, p.77; 1919, p.99 and 1926, p.133. Emergency C<sup>ee</sup>, 31 May, 1917.

was a collective one which developed as they worked together.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps Sam Clowes' case shows why he and other officials could not separate themselves from the work experience of their industry. As Clowes put it towards the end of his career, 'I myself worked at the bench 34 years and I feel the effects of it every morning with about half an hour's hard coughing'.<sup>74</sup>

The evidence for the 'incorporation' argument among the potters is very shaky. Superficially, it would be possible to derive a picture from the comments of masters and the local middle class, of the potters' leaders as sober, respectful and respectable, at ease in the world of manufacturers and judges. For example, in 1916, an owner described Clowes as a 'sturdy, straightforward leader ... generally carrying himself in such a way as to earn the confidence of employers and employed'. Yet, looking more closely, it becomes clear that the potters' leaders were being constantly reassessed by local figures of authority. Throughout the period the same Sam Clowes was attacked for being too 'rugged in his way of expressing things' and found guilty 'of indiscretion in speech'. Jabez Booth was marked down for showing 'advanced democratic

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73. P. Gazette, 1 December, 1921, p.1828. Conflict between lodges and leadership, NEC mins., 17 July, 1920. Officials' collective efforts during coal strike, NEC., mins, 17 April, 1920. Cf. H. Clegg, The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain (Oxford 1979), p.231. For a notorious account of the transformation of union leaders see F. Knee, 'The Revolt of Labour', Social Democrat, November 1910 'Having to do the work practically of lawyers, there is no help for it; they have to live nearly up to the lawyer's level. The very additional comfort which is absolutely necessary for the production and maintenance of an efficient trade union official has the effect ... of inducing different habits of mind', in K. Coates & T. Topham (eds.), Workers Control (1968. Revised edn. 1970).

74. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.18.

leanings' and 'speaking injudiciously'. To argue that these trade union leaders were sucked into collaboration with manufactures' values does not pay heed to the evidence.<sup>75</sup>

One further preoccupation of writers on trade unionism has been the question of democracy. Vic Allen's observations are particularly apt. He pointed out that a trade union was 'not based on theoretical concepts prior to it, that is on some concept of democracy, but on the end it serves'.<sup>76</sup> In the potters' case there seems to have been an implicit balance between the aspirations for self-government and problem of how the union was to be an effective organisation. Firstly, the checks and balances of the rulebook seem to have operated. The annual delegation functioned as planned with a healthy turnover of delegates each year, scrutineers employed and members free to see the books at any time.<sup>77</sup> The range of the representative committees and lodges appear to have provided a means of expressing the interests of the different occupational groups. Clearly certain groups had more industrial and therefore union power than others: in that sense the union was very much a reflection of the workplace. In many ways it was the flexibility of the union, as shown in its working that prevented any one group from enjoying complete power or suppressing internal opposition. The craft groups were extremely influential yet they, the executive and the union

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75. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1916, p.1168; 1 March, p.235 & 1 May, p.402, 1918; 1 June, 1919, p.616 and 1 Dec., 1924, p.2022. For an interpretation of public statements and the decoding of contemporary vocabularies see P. Steed, 'The Language of Edwardian Politics' in D. Smith (ed.), People and a Proletariat (1980), pp. 148-165. See also below, Ch. 4.3.

76. Cole, Organised Labour, p.49. Phelps-Brown, Growth of British Industrial Relations, p.231. V. Allen, Power in Trade Unions, p.62. R. Michels, Political Parties (1911. 1959 edn. New York) p.401 for the notion of the 'iron law of oligarchy' whereby organisations give rise to the domination of elected over electors.

77. A. Delegation reports passim and especially 1914, p.49 & 1923, p.118. NEC mins., 30 Sept., 1920. L531, A. Hollins, 15 Sept. 1917.

leaders authority was circumscribed by numerous traditions and strengths of local organisation which the union contained. The alternation between the aspiration for self-government and the need for collective effectiveness was a theme which ran through the activity of the potters throughout this era and beyond.<sup>78</sup>

### 3.3 Membership

It is a strange thing but a major aspect of trade union history which receives relatively little attention is the membership.<sup>79</sup> Apart from numerical extent, the dimensions of membership, if treated in detail, may provide insights into not only how a union operates but also how individual workers experienced trade unionism. The following section will explore and explain both the extent and growth of the union as well as the composition of the rank and file. The intention is to develop a clearer idea of what it meant to belong to a union and also to draw out the relationship between the member and the formal structure and organisation.

The potters in the late 19th century were often categorised as poor supporters of unionism.<sup>80</sup> This view is over-simplified. There is a distinction between formal, recorded and informal unrecorded union membership. Many potters supported the craft unions and the early NAS by word and action although they could not afford to become fully paid up members. For instance, in Longton, Noah Parkes found in 1901 that due

78. See below section 3.3.

79. Cf. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, History of British Trade Unions, Vol. I, pp. 1 & 83. H. Pelling, A History of British Trade Unions (1972) pp. 281-283.

80. Manchester Guardian, 1901 as quoted in Shaw, When I was a Child, p.183. Tawney in Warburton, Trade Union Organization, pp. 12ff.

to poverty many china workers could only informally associate with the union. He explained that 'since the last great strike they had obtained a good many members from that district, but they were not financial members'. Potters moved in and out of financial membership as circumstances dictated. There were continual references during the period of unionist and non-unionist working and then acting together in disputes. As has been shown elsewhere, interpreting low union membership as being a product of simply worker apathy is dangerous and superficial.<sup>81</sup>

The total union membership figures may be examined with these qualifications in mind. Table 13a outlines the progression of membership in the NAS and among unions nationally during the period. It has been shown how the industrial power of a union 'depends more upon union density than upon the absolute number of union members'.<sup>82</sup> Table 13b therefore indicates the levels of union density, locally and nationally for the same period. Broadly speaking, absolute union membership for the potters appears to have followed the national trend. However, if union density in the pottery industry is compared with the national proportions, differences stand out. In the period 1898-1907 the density in pottery stood at 6 - 12% and compared unfavourably with the national figure of 12-14%. By 1918-1921 the pottery industry's density of

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81. S. Sentinel, 14 March, 1901. A financial member was a full, fee-paying member. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1908, p.347 & 1 Jan., 1909, p.194. A. Hollins, 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.29. See also, Gutman, Work, Culture and Society, p.297. P. Spaven, 'Main gates of protest. Contrasts in Rank and File Activity among the South Yorkshire Miners 1858-1894' in Independent Collier, p.216. Pollard, History of Labour in Sheffield p.221.

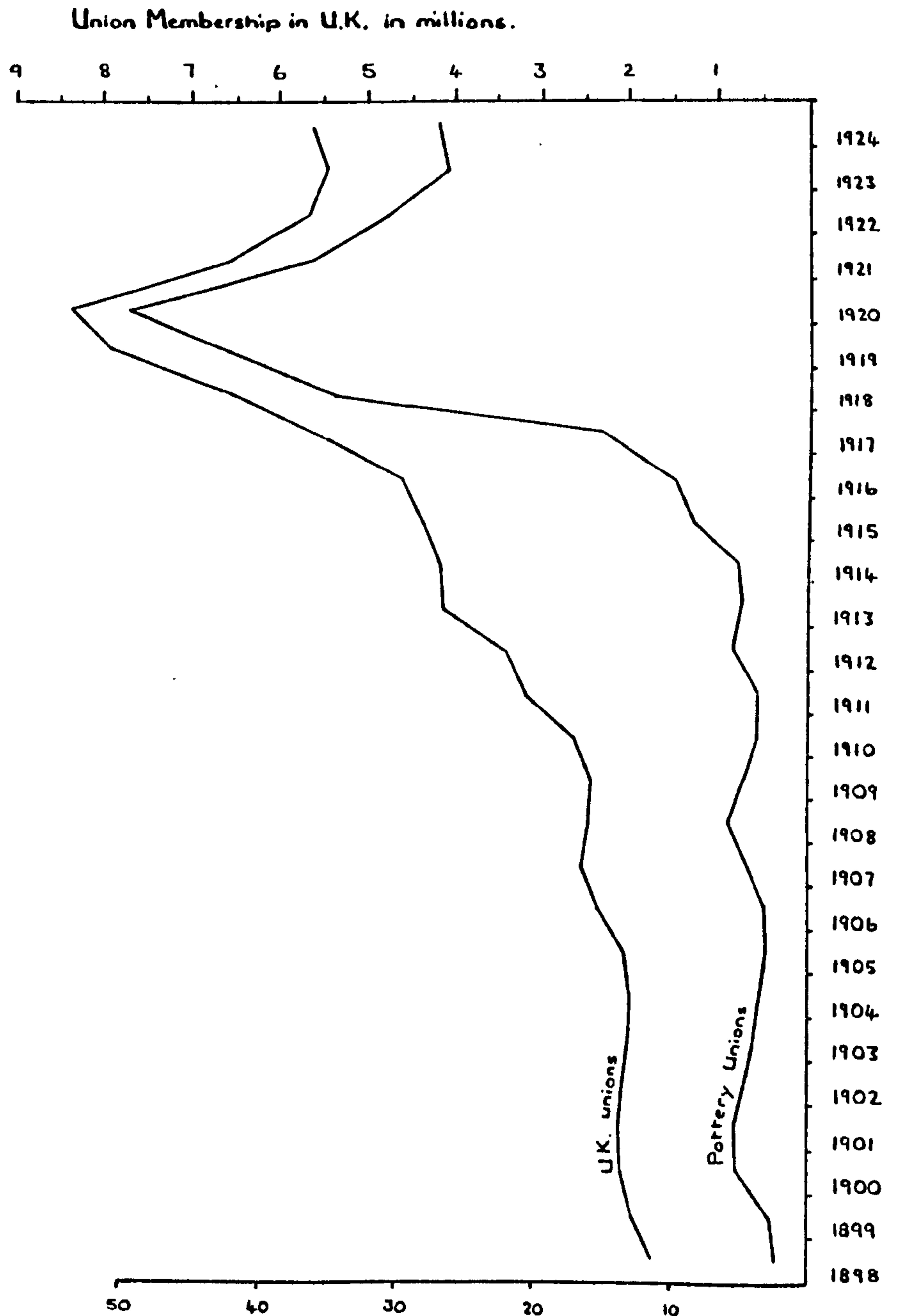
82. G.S. Bain & R. Price, Profiles of Union Growth. A Comparative Statistical Portrait of Eight Countries (Oxford, 1980) pp. 160-163.



Table 13 a

Union Membership in the Pottery Industry and UK 1898-1924

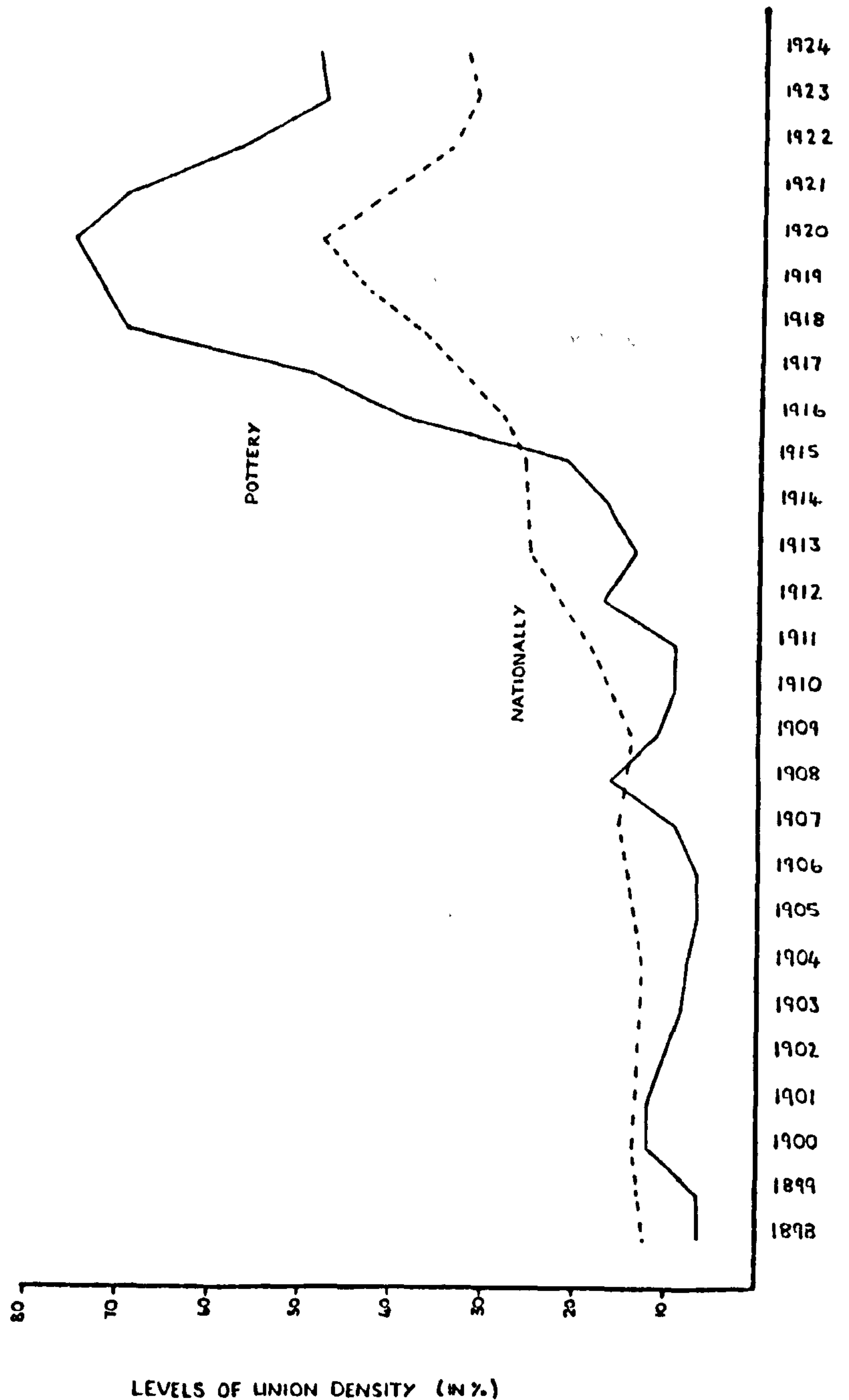
Source: Annual Reports on Trade Unions 1900-1912. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation Minutes; D17 union membership lists 1908-1918; L35 A. Hollins to Co-Operative Insurance Society. H. Pelling, A History of British Trade Unions (2nd edn. 1971), pp. 280-281.



Pottery Union Membership in Thousands.

Table 13bUnion Density in the Pottery Industry and UK 1898-1924

Source: See Table 13a and Staffordshire Census, 1901, p.69; 1911, p.65 and 1921, p.54. The level of density in the pottery industry is an estimate given that only decennial figures are available for the total workforce. G. Bain & R. Price, Profiles of Union Growth (1980), p.165.



68 - 75 % had risen well above the national mark of 40-50%. Two questions arise: why was pottery's density so low in the early 1900s, and why did it rise so dramatically in the later part of the period?

The potters' low density relative to the national figure must be put in perspective. National union density was higher than the potters' but it was not uniformly distributed. Of the two million trade unionists in 1906, four out of five unions had less than a thousand members. The coal, building, engineering, iron and metal and cotton unions accounted for two thirds of the country's trade unionists in 1906, and still made up half the total by 1913.<sup>83</sup> The potters' relatively low union density still requires explanation. It has been shown how the market conditions for the sub-industries varied, with certain sections badly depressed down to 1908. Low wages, unemployment and defensive postures inhibited formal membership, even among the sanitary pressers and ovenmen. It was the irregularity of the wage system which led Shaw to describe the potters' union as 'haphazardly followed'. The manifold divisions within the workforce and the inter-union disputes of 1900, 1907 and 1909, did little to induce new members to join the NAS in its formative period. Impaired health for some potters meant that poverty denied them the time and leisure for deliberation necessary for union participation to flourish. As will be shown, the culture of the potbank was often a restraint on unionism. Individualist craft values were strong and employers' paternalist regimes made union organisation more difficult.

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83. Phelps-Brown, Growth of British Industrial Relations, p.216. Clapham, Economic History of Britain, Machines and National Rivalries, pp. 321-323. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement (1937) pp. 226-229.

Certain manufacturers refused to accept the legitimacy of trade unions: they banned them from their 'banks and restricted bargaining to the individual or workgroup, thus shrouding unionism 'in secrecy and fear'.<sup>84</sup>

The explanation for the potters' union's marked growth in density from 1911, in spite of the difficulties and restraints which existed, must be taken through a number of stages. Firstly the potential for unionism did exist. As one potter remarked: 'the industry was so localised ... they ought to have the strongest union of any trade in the world'.<sup>85</sup> Secondly, models of union growth are available. Davis shows that positive changes in union membership correlate more closely with sharp changes in prices than general prosperity.<sup>86</sup> As wages lag behind prices, so workers must organise if they are to avoid a drop in their standard of living. In the past, a period of rising prices was nearly always a period of increased production and decreasing unemployment. He also points out that there must be major grievances involved for the workers concerned. Davis's model only helps to explain part of the potters' experience in the period 1911-1920. There is a need to focus also on the role of employers and key actors.<sup>87</sup> Economic prosperity may have set the pre-conditions for union growth but it was the activities of certain individuals and groups which proved to be the all-important triggers of expansion.

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84. See R. Whipp, 'The Stamp of Futility: the Staffordshire Potters 1880-1905' in R. Harrison & J. Zeitlin (eds.), Divisions of Labour. Craft Unionism and Technical Change 1870-1914 (forthcoming). C. Shaw, op.cit., p.191.

85. T. Coxon, S. Advertiser, 16 January, 1909, p.7.

86. H.D. Davis, 'The Theory of Union Growth', Quarterly Journal of Economics, Vol. 55, 1941, pp. 611-633.

87. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1911, p.571, 'by common consent trade has never been so good' and 1 May, 1917, p.602, for the role of employers. See also, R. Price & G.S. Bain, 'Union growth revisited', British Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. XIV, Nov. 1976.

During the period 1911-1920, rising wages and increased trade led to regular wage income and rises in real earnings for many in the pottery industry. Some of the poverty-related barriers to union membership were dismantled. Unemployment dropped to the lowest for a decade. In common with other unions the potters recorded an increase of around 20% in membership between 1910-1912. The labour market tightened, especially during the war, and so the perennial problem for the union of surplus labour virtually disappeared.<sup>88</sup> In conditions of full employment and high demand for products and labour (except in sanitary and tiles), the union was able to make demonstrative stands on certain issues. These issues attracted a wide range of members. In May, 1915, a 10% increase was put forward by the union for all workers. Minimum wage levels for women and equal pay for equal work for men and women became union policy. Strong feeling among the membership developed against non-unionists receiving the same wage increases as unionists thereby increasing the pressure to join the NAS.<sup>89</sup>

The context of the period 1911-20 was one of rising demand with owners needing to maintain production to ensure profits. When 3,000 potters left to answer Kitchener's call, manufacturers were unable to continue production without worker and union co-operation. It was observed in 1915, that 'labour never stood in a more autocratic position in the Potteries than it does at the present time'.<sup>90</sup> Masters gave

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88. Labour Gazette, 1912, p.267. P. Gazette, 1 Dec., 1915, p.333; 1 Jan., p.79 & 1 June, 1916, p.651. NCPI Mins., 18 Sep., 1919. J. Thomas, 'Trade unionism in the Potteries' in G. Cole, British Trade Unionism To-day. A Survey (1939) p.430.

89. P. Gazette, 1 May, p.560 & 1 June, 1915, p.782; 1 March, 1916, p.309 & 1 July, 1917, p.697. Violence erupted inside potbanks over non-unionists. Cf. B. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, pp. 56, 90, 111 & 159.

90. P. Gazette, 1 August, 1915, p.895.

unionists recognition at the formal and, to a great extent, the informal level as well. Isolated workgroups were free to join the union officially without the fear of open victimisation. As a master admitted in 1917, 'some explanation for the large accretion to the membership of the unions is due to the recognition which manufacturers themselves are now giving to these organisations of their workpeople'.<sup>91</sup> By this recognition the union became the prime means of gaining the successive 'war bonuses': these four sets of bonuses were of great importance being described as 'the largest single increase in the history of the trade'. One seasoned official was under no illusions regarding the phenomenal rise in membership. Looking back from July 1918 he observed how 'many workers have joined through the economic pressure of the increased cost of living and have only become members for the purpose of obtaining an increase in the war bonus'.<sup>92</sup>

The events of the period ensured that these factors making for union growth overcame the traditional sectionalism of the potters. The impact of technological change on the craft and skilled workers was critical. As the period progressed, craft unionists and especially their leaders became acutely aware of the threat to their status on the 'bank and their bargaining power. Changes occurred across the production process; organisations to combat them could no longer remain sectional. As early as 1909, Thomas Coxon, a presser, saw how 'they were still in a very backward position from a trades unionist point of view, 'since

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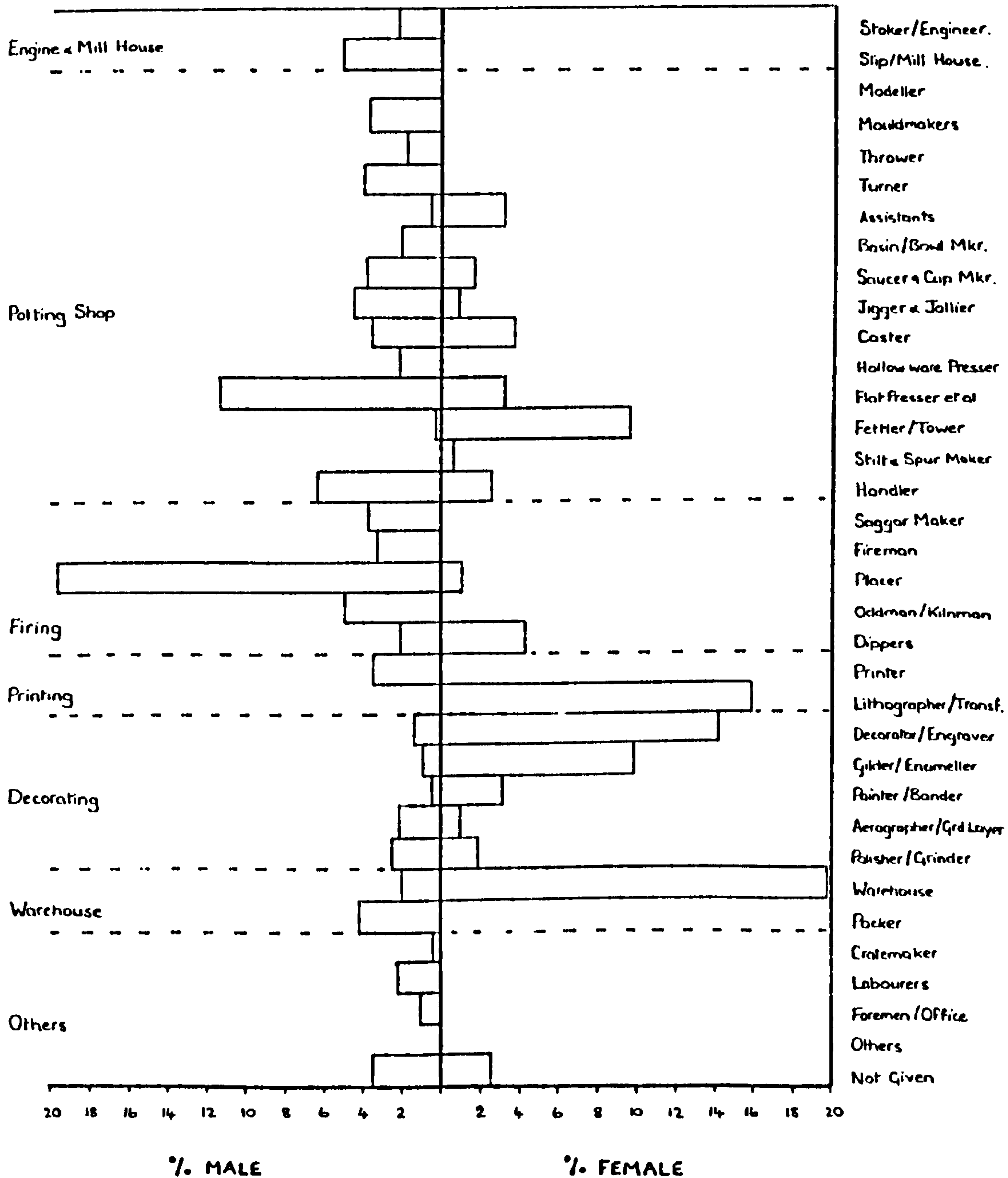
91. Clegg, Fox and Thompson, History of British Trade Unions, Vol. 1, p.331. G. Bain, The Growth of White Collar Unionism (Oxford 1970) pp. 122-135. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1917, p.602.

92. Labour Gazette, 1917, pp. 27, 145, 211 & 414. NCPI mins, 25 July, 1918, p.91. See Table 13a. W. Broad's collector's book passim.

Table 14

Occupational Composition of Burslem Lodge of the NSPW 1920

Source: Reconstructed from Burslem Lodge Membership Registers, CATU COLL.



'a revolution was taking place in methods of production in the Potteries, and it was time that they should organise so efficiently that they would be able to take a proper share of the results of their production'. At the same time, Sam Clowes was aware that 'the employers were wide awake enough to play one section of workers against the other' and therefore 'they (the NAS) wanted to organise all sections of workers. They recognised that the time had arrived when one class of workers should not be organised and the other left untouched'.<sup>93</sup> During the war, the large-scale substitution of women for absent skilled male workers made the need for industry wide organisation even more necessary. Popular feeling among workers regarding the wage levels of the unskilled, the labourers and assistants was high. Above all, in the war years the individualism and separatism of the potbank was broken down. The pooling system meant that workers moved between potbanks: they became aware of alternative methods and practices; the sectional perspectives were eroded. The potters underwent, what Orton recorded generally for the period as, a 'social transformation'.<sup>94</sup>

An analysis of the composition of union membership may shed light both on the formal and informal activities of the union and the relationships of its constituent parts. In the potters' union three themes of composition are particularly illuminating: skill, family and gender.

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93. S. Advertiser, 16 January, 1909, p.7. NEC. mins. 24 January, 1919.

94. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1916, p.425. The 'comb-out' of male labour was up to 50% for certain skilled trades. Op.cit., 1 July, p.698 and 1 September, 1917, p.897. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 3 June, 1918. Orton, Labour in Transition, p.125. A. Briggs in H. Clegg & A. Flanders, The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain (Oxford 1967) p.36. E. Hobsbawm, Labour's Turning Point, 1880-1900 (1948) p.xviii. Price, Masters, Unions and Men, p.176, especially for the need to examine the changes and expansion of craft and new unions during this period. Hunt, British Labour History, p.295.



A comparison of the occupational distribution in the pottery industry and the union, for the years 1920-1922, was made (see Tables 6 and 14). It revealed that the craft and skilled groups each had a stronger numerical presence in the union compared to the relatively small number in each craft group in the workforce. The male pressers, while amounting to only 2% of the workforce made up 12% of the union sample. Across the other male occupations the size of occupation is fairly well maintained from industry to union. The main divergence is in the dippers' case, who were still at this point organised by the ovenmen's union. Similarly, in the female ranks the occupations which are heavily represented in the union are the highly skilled groups. The distribution of male and females within the industry is well reflected in the union. The men predominate in the potting shops and oven departments, the women in decorating and packing. Indeed, taking the Hanley lodge membership and comparing the 1920 and 1930 occupational distribution, it was found that there was no statistically significant change in that distribution for men or women.<sup>95</sup>

These findings enable one to talk more precisely about the union's character and to interpret its actions and the images it enjoyed. From the distribution figures it is quite legitimate to categorise the NAS as a craft or skilled union. Those figures explain why the union retained

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95. Absence of suitable sources is a general problem. Cf. Walker, Juteopolis, pp. 148-198. The membership registers of the lodges are by no means complete. The entries regarding name, marital status, residence are generally sound: those for age and trade are sometimes missing, hence the use made of sampling techniques. Note also that comparing the Hanley lodge entries for 1920 and 1930 there was no statistically significant change in the occupation or skill structure of the union for men or women; using the Chi<sup>2</sup> test gave values of 7.26 for occupation and 5.49 for skill with 3 degrees of freedom.

the trade committees alongside the lodges. It was the trade committees which gave direct expression to the craft and skilled groups' interests within a wider, growing union. The occupational profile also provides the reason why the Balfour Committee and local writers still refer to the potters' craft union in the late 1920s, in spite of the NAS's declaration of industrial unionism.<sup>96</sup> Skill continued to provide the framework for the union therefore from the 19th and well into the 20th century. Yet, the profile also emphasises that by 1920, whilst the skilled groups still dominated the union, the dispersion of members' occupations was across the whole industry, across all departments and across all skill levels. Comparing the newly amalgamated craft unions of 1906 and the NAS in 1920 it becomes clear that the union shifted from being a closed to an open union.<sup>97</sup>

The figures also point to a further feature of the connection between workplace and union. The relationship of the workgroup to the organisation of work and the social relations of the potbank has already been shown.<sup>98</sup> It is interesting that the union lodges categorise the membership by their workgroup function. If placed beside other evidence, this categorisation is indicative of the workgroup as a means for not only job but also union entry. The workgroup was also the main point of reference for most workers once they were inside the union and for

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96. Cole, History of the Working Class Movement, p.28. Clegg, Industrial Relations, p.182. Parker et al, The Sociology of Industry, p.130. Thomas, in Cole, British Trade Unionism To-day, in loc.cit., p.430. Balfour C<sup>ee</sup> on Industry and Trade, Survey of Industrial Relations, Feb. 1926, p.296. See Table 14. Turner, Union Structure, Growth and Policy, p.198 ff.

97. Holden, 'Industrial Relations at Vauxhall', pp. 28-29. A. Exell, 'Morris Motors in the 1930s: Part II,' History Workshop, No. 7, Spring 1979, p.61. Cf. Hunt, British Labour History, pp. 295 & 311. Pollard, History of Labour in Sheffield, p.237.

98. See ch. 2.5. Cf. Price, Masters, Unions and Men, p.181.

Fig. 5

The Leese Family's Union Membership, Burslem Lodge, 1920

Source: CATU COLL, Burslem Lodge Membership Registers 1920, Male Register p.21 and Female Register p.15.

Programme Number	NAME	RESIDENCE	Contributions Rate	Age	Date of Birt.	Date of Entry	Time in Calling
(Male Register p21 :-)							
603	Richard Leese	24 Main St	9	52	27/12/09	Full Year Burslem	
604	Richard Leese	24 "	9	26	29/09/04	Full	do
605	Ernest Leese	24 "	9	19	18/07/24	5/6	do
606	Wesley Leese	24 "	4/2			8/12	
(Female Register p15 :-)							
273	Annie Leese	24 Main St	4	24	10/11/95	22/5/15	Spencer
274	Edith Leese	24 "	4	29	2/6/91	29/1/16	do

any action which they took there. This workgroup consciousness is illustrated by the letter of H.J. Salt who wrote to Sam Clowes on 20 January, 1920:

I want to know if you can do anything for our Department that is the polishers. I think we are about the only department without a wage scheme. As we are now its really no benefit to me being a member I am only one in out of four men and one woman but I think they would join if we became represented as a department.

The family was not only directly relevant to the social organisation of work, but one of the strongest threads in the social fabric of the union. The linkage of home and work via the family was reproduced in the NAS. The potters family appears in the membership ledgers. Using Burslem, the largest lodge, and its register for 1916-1920, a sample amounting to 1% of the NAS was taken. It transpired that 30% of the women and 45% of the men members were in the union as part of a male or female family group. In other words each register recorded large numbers of fathers, sons and brothers or mothers, daughters and sisters from the same family. It was then possible to merge the male and female registers and reconstitute whole families of potters who were members of the union. For instance, Area 23 of Burslem, consisting of 20 streets and 341 members, contained 36 families or groups, amounting to almost 30% of the area's membership.<sup>100</sup> Figure 5 is an example of a family group reconstituted from the union register.

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99. L445, H.J. Salt of Keeling & Co., 20 Jan., 1920. In this instance department means (polisher's) workgroup. Cf. J. Child, R. Loveridge & M. Warner, 'Towards an organizational study of trade unions', Sociology, Vol. 7, 1973, p.75. Clegg, Industrial Relations, p.42.

100. This is almost certainly an under-estimate since the readings for family groups was strictly limited to those who were co-resident with common surnames. Higher figures would have been obtained for family membership had the apparent co-residing in-laws and relations been included. For examples of family groups and job succession see the Burslem lodge, Haywood St. entries 1251-1254.

The relevance of the family for the behaviour of trade unionists and the relationship of individual members to the unions was repeatedly shown. Collectors highlighted the role of the family as a mediating force between the rank and file and the union bureaucracy. George Eardley, a collector, reached this conclusion:

After the little experience I have had in the way of canvassing, it appears to me a difficult proposition to get these people to join the society, unless the atmosphere of trade unionism prevails in the house or workshop (my emphasis).<sup>101</sup>

The words of pottery workers leave one in no doubt of the effects of family life on individual or group union membership. A union official recorded the following indicative remarks in the early 1920s: 'father refused to pay as he thinks society ought to pay sick benefit, also son refuses because his father does'; or 'one home in Brook St. I have visited there are 5 pottery workers and only 1 in the Society. Their father says he does not believe in unions'.<sup>102</sup> Many workers clearly joined or left the union as a family, which is in line with the collective family based survival strategies identified above.<sup>103</sup>

While studies of trade unions have recognised the relationship between the workplace and the union the contribution of the home and family to that relationship is unexplored. Bornat's work remains one of the few British studies to analyse the inter-relationship of the work situation, domestic economy and trade unionism. For industries with a high percentage of female labour, we would agree that 'the close link of home and work maintained through dependence on and exploitation

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101. G. Eardly, 'Re-Canvassing', report to general secretary, Dec. 1924, p.2. The union developed 'family membership cards', Finance C<sup>ee</sup>, May 2, 1919.

102. L30, 1924 union survey replies, passim.

103. Longton lodge membership register for 1920s, p.58. See also pp. 50, 51, 55, 56, 58 and 67.

of family ties provided the context for participation in trade unions'. Others suggest that the role of the family in work was diminishing and its functions being taken over by trade unions by 1900.<sup>104</sup> In the potters' case the family continued to be a principal feature of work organisation well into the 1920s: for many potters it provided the bridge between workshop and union.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the NAS's composition and growth was the high proportion of female members. By 1918, 58% of women potters were formal union members compared to 21% for the clothing industry, 27% for printing and paper, and 63.5% for textiles. The explanation for the sharp rise in official female membership lies partly in the set of factors already outlined for the whole union. Women benefitted especially from the higher wages, constant employment and the new job opportunities which the war period presented.<sup>105</sup> The large increase from 1914-1918 from 2,000 to 23,000 given a stationary level of around 1,000 for the preceding period, is at first sight puzzling. Orthodox reasons for the subordination of women in home, workplace and union are readily available for the 1900-1914 period.<sup>106</sup>

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104. Cf. Bornat, 'Home, work and union', especially p.65 for family method of entry to union. P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics. The Culture of the Factory in later Victorian England (Hassocks 1980) pp. 61-62 and 339. See also Parker et al, Sociology of Industry, p.49. T. Hareven & R. Langenbach, Amoskeag. Life and Work in an American Factory City in New England (1979), p.119. M. Anderson, 'Sociological history and the working class family: Smelser revisited', Social History No. 3, October 1976, p.327, hints at the relations of family, work and union.

105. Cole, Organised Labour, p.158. B. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, pp. 111-112. C<sup>o</sup> on Women in Industry (1919) Cmd. 167, p.11.

106. Royal Commission on Labour, 1893-4, 5th & final Report, 'Summary upon employment of women' and 'difficulties of organisation', para. 762 (a), p.96. M.A. Hamilton, Women at Work (1941), pp. 28, 57-58 & 162. M. McCarthy, 'Women in trade unions today' in L. Middleton (ed.) Women in the Labour Movement (1977), pp. 162 & 166. Annual Reports on Trade Unions 1900-1912. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation Minutes and D17 Union membership lists.

These explanations fail to account for why such apparently deep-rooted obstacles to female trade unionism could be demolished overnight. It will be argued that an awareness of the ideological and institutional constraints is insufficient. A study of the unofficial, informal modes of behaviour reveals the ability of women workers to act as trade unionists or if that was not possible, to act alongside unionists and to display high levels of union consciousness. These forms of female activity existed before and during the period 1900-1914. When economic and institutional restraints lifted after 1914 these small-scale, often unreported types of female action were given formal recognition and became organised on a larger scale.

Acting upon the largely pessimistic tradition in the history of women and trade unions it is possible to uncover evidence of the subordination of women at work and in unions. It has already been shown how women potters, by virtue of customary values, age and skill were overshadowed by male workers in terms of public status and authority. Women in particular faced the problems of irregular employment; being used as cheap labour by manufacturers, which led to male unionists' enmity, and the restraint on female union activity produced by the traditional contemporary norms of behaviour. As Isabella Ford put it: 'trade unionism means rebellion, and the orthodox teaching for women is submission'. Initially, the NAS appears to have been an example of the subordinate role of women in trade unions. Women paid dues and received benefits at half to a third the rate of men. No female delegates to the annual conference appeared before 1916. Union attitudes

apparently continued to embody male dominance: thus the one week notice for women compared to the two week or month's notice for men was part of union policy.<sup>107</sup>

However, to be guided by the pessimists view would mean missing a whole world of female union activity. Women potters did take part in formal and especially informal types of union action.<sup>108</sup> The WTUL, following their campaigns in the 1890s, undertook regular organising work among the women potters from 1900-1915. The lead poisoning campaign, led by Mary MacArthur and Gertrude Tuckwell and their urging of women to claim their statutory rights won high praise from male unionists. During the changed economic circumstances of the war the unpublicised preparatory work of the WTUL bore fruit. The NAS's official recruitment of women at that time bears all the brush strokes of Marland Brodie, one of the women's earliest organisers.<sup>109</sup> Similarly the work of Sarah Bennett and unnamed women activists who assisted Clowes in the china, and Booth in the jet and rockingham sub-industries should not go unnoticed. As Barbara Drake noted there were several women on the district committees after 1915 and men and women potters mixed freely in the lodges. Women's presence was particularly strong in the collectors' ranks, where they performed at an equal rate to men. In Fenton lodge, there were seven women and only five men collectors. The work of female organisers<sup>110</sup>

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107. See above ch. 2.5. A. Delegation, 1915, pp. 60-61 & 1916, p.64. 1920 male rate 6d, females 3d per week. B. Webb, Report of the War Cabinet C<sup>ee</sup> on Women in Industry (1919), Cmd.135, p.73 & Minority Report, p.267ff. G. Tuckwell, 'Commercial Manslaughter', Nineteenth Century, August, 1898, p.256. S. Lewenhak, Women and Trade Unions (1977), passim.

108. A. Kessler-Harris, 'Women's wage work as myth and history', Labor History, 19, 1978. Walker, Juteopolis, p.47.

109. WTUL Quarterly Review, Oct. 1906 and Annual Review for 1900-1909, especially 1909, p.20. Parkin, Autobiography of a Trade Unionist, p.XIIII. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1911, p.1154. NEC, mins, sub-c<sup>ee</sup> on female labour, 23 Dec., 1915. See also, T. Olcott, 'Dead Centre, the women's trade union movement in London', London Journal, Vol. 2, 1976.

110. S. Sentinel, 14 Feb. 1901. S. Advertiser, 23 July, 1898, p.4. S. Bennett, Sam Clowes scrapbook, 8 April 1907; S. Advertiser, 23 Nov. 1907, p.5. Langton & Fenton lodge registers inside front cover. L30 survey:22 male 14 female named collectors.



Dora Mycock and Agnes Lawton, though less publicised than Lovatt's or Clowes', covered all sections of the women's workforce. Lawton even established recognition from the notorious Grindley & Co. Both women were regularly winning, signing and holding companies to agreements regarding female potters on the shop floor: both were front line negotiators in the 1916-1924 industrial negotiations.<sup>111</sup>

At the lowest, informal levels of union activity in the workshop women were active in defending their own interests either independently or jointly with male workers. The available evidence indicates a continuous strain of small scale action by female potters long before the 1914 rise in union membership. The 1907 sanitary dispute has gone down in Potteries folklore yet the strike of women tile workers at Henry Richards in Tunstall held at the same time, has received less attention.<sup>112</sup> In November 1911, seven women aerographers were given a few hours' notice of wage reductions by Grindleys. The entire female workforce of 160 struck successfully in support of the aerographers.<sup>113</sup> The union's files contain regular accounts of women workers' activities during the large sectional disputes down to the form of workshop flare-ups lasting barely an hour. Men and women acted together just as they worked with each other. Emily Hall worked as a transferrer with Mr. Birch, a printer

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111. P. Gazette, 1 Oct. 1911, p.1157. D. Mycock. L28, L29, field notes for 1908 women's wages arbitration. D46, in 1912 for example Agnes Lawton's expenses for union work are as high as Lovatt's. L297, stoneware girls to Mrs. Lawton. L639, Grindley's to Mrs. Lawton, 30 Aug. & 1 Sept. 1911, 7 Oct., 12 Oct. 1919. L367, Lithographers, 24 Sept. 1914. L145, Mycock and Furnival's transferrers, 22 Jan. 1920. L224 Kent's aerographers, 8 May, 1923. See NEC mins. 1917ff for Mycock & Lawton intervention. There were four female candidates for new organiser post, in loc.cit. 13 April, 1918. 1924 Wage Inquiry, pp. 59 & 68. Evidence to Departmental Committee on Employment of Women & Young Persons on the Two-Shift System, Cmd.1038 (1920) Q1861-1913.

112. Interview with E. Growtt. S. Sentinel, 30 March, 1907.

113. P. Gazette, 1 March 1908, p.348; 1 Oct., 1911, p.1155 & 1 May, 1913, p.583. Cusack, 1911 Marl Strike, p.5.

in 1912. While ill, the manager tried to replace her and on her return gave her notice of dismissal. Joint action by the printers and transferrers in the workshop was taken to recover her job. Much female action was subsumed within the workgroup and went unreported. Therefore, during the war period women were in high demand for often pivotal positions in the work process, earned high, regular wages and their activity was more widely reported. Their war-time behaviour was seen as novel. In reality they were continuing at an official union level what they had practised at the routine, unofficial level for years.<sup>114</sup>

Finally, within the total membership of the union there existed a wealth of rank and file activity which undermines the assertion that union leaders became the 'managers' of their union.<sup>115</sup> The assumption behind such views is of a strict, static, unchanging relationship between leadership and rank and file. As has been shown in the potters' union, there was a continual interplay between officials, the differing levels of organisation and all areas of the union membership.<sup>116</sup> The heterogenous mass which the union became after amalgamation and the growth to a 40,000 membership made the tight, bureaucratic direction, alleged by certain writers on unionism, impossible. The authority and power of leaders and certain sections were considerable but they were nowhere near absolute. To attribute such capabilities to union leaders or groups is to deny the worker or workgroup independence of thought. In the 1920s members left

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114. L673, to Myotts lithographers, 3 Dec., 1912. D38 Ovenmen's society membership lists for 1920, 47.66% were women. L383, Printers & transferrers, 3 May 1914. Cf. Cole, *Organised Labour*, p.94. A. Marwick, *Women at War 1914-1918* (1977) p.143.

115. C. Wright Mills, *The New Men of Power* (New York, 1948) in Hyman, *Strikes*, pp. 74-77.

116. For a sharp focus on rank and file activity see J. Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement*, passim.

the union precisely because they rejected the advice of union officials. Whole families in the china section tore up their cards after the 1924 China agreement.<sup>117</sup> The period abounds with examples of autonomous rank and file activity which union leaders had to react to rather than create, organise and direct. A group of women towers at Booths were exasperated by the lack of official union activity and told Arthur Hollins, 'the men do not seem willing to fight for us. So the best plan was to fight for ourselves'.<sup>118</sup> The mosaic of pottery manufacture produced constant tension. The china saggarmakers in 1916 rejected the union earthenware saggars demand since china saggars were far heavier than in earthenware. The union secretary admitted to a firm on 22 December, 1913 that 'regarding the refusal of your litho transferrers to go with the Shrewsbury pattern. It is quite correct that they are acting entirely on their own and against advice given to them by myself on Friday'.<sup>119</sup>

### Conclusion

The combination of the 19th and early 20th century experience of the potters' craft unions conditioned the formation of the NAS in 1906 and constrained the amalgamated union's growth and relations with other unions. In spite of formal amalgamation trade unionism remained sectional and diffuse. The amalgamation process extended over almost the whole

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117. L489, Mr. Bird to Lovatt, 26 April, 1916. 'Gray's throwers changed their minds and refused to send a deputation to the conference for the 21st ... It seems to me that there is something requiring stringent amendment in your organisation. There is something far wrong in a Society, by which you are authorized to represent them in an Arbitration, and yet you do not seem to be able to keep the men at work pending the proceedings, which leaves them the power to strike. This is afronting your authority.' (Original emphasis). L472, Llewellyn to Lovatt, 16 April, 1912. L438, E.J. Tilley to S. Clowes, 20 Jan., 1920. Cf. D.A. McCabe, National Collective Bargaining in the Pottery Industry (Baltimore 1932) p.109.

118. L547, letter signed 'Booth's Towers' to A. Hollins, (n.d.).

119. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1916, p.651. L470, Lovatt to Grindley & Co., 22 Dec., 1913.

period. The nominal structure of the NAS was the outcome of the influences of craft loyalties; the range of occupational groups; the Potteries' geographical features and the responses of the varied workforce to the events of the period. The craft groups ensured the continuance of their trade committees yet pressures for broader representation resulted in the formation of the district committees and the restructuring of the NEC after 1915. In operation the union structure was highly flexible as the attempt was made to convert the spontaneous energy of the pottery workers into permanent collective organisation. The official structure at first appears rigid and mechanistic: its operation was far more organic and the key to the NAS's survival and growth.<sup>120</sup>

The distinction between formal and informal action has enabled a more subtle explanation to be offered of the meaning of union membership. At the informal level workshop collective action was continuous: only at the formal level was there marked discontinuity as changed economic conditions after 1914 enabled workers to translate informal practices into formal, paid-up union activity. The union came to mirror the potbank very strongly.<sup>121</sup> By accommodating the diversity of skills, by embodying the linkage of work and the family and by adapting the

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120. D. Pugh, D. Hickson, C. Hinings, 'An empirical taxonomy of structures of work organizations', Administrative Science Quarterly, 14, 1969, pp. 115-126 for an analysis of mechanistic versus organic organisations. See also, A. Flanders, Management and Union, pp. 38-47, on the need 'to infer what unions are for from what they do' as opposed to what they ought to do.

121. T. Matsumura, The Victorian Flint Glass Makers, 1850-1880. The Labour Aristocracy Revisited (forthcoming, Manchester 1983), p.35. R. Price, 'Labour, the labour process and the dynamic of labour history', p.14, paper presented to the Commonwealth Labour History Conference, Coventry, 3-5 Sept., 1981, for the 'connection between the increasing collective organisation of labour and the changes in the division of labour' during this period. See also, Harrison, Independent Collier, pp. 4-5. Reid, 'The Division of Labour', pp. 214, 217. Latham, Rank and File Movements, p.9 for 'models of self-activity' in the building union.

ability of women to play an active part in the workshop, the NAS progressed decisively from being a closed craft society to becoming an open, industrial union.<sup>122</sup>

The incorporation thesis and the contention that unions were in effect managed and manipulated by their leadership is unsupported by the potters' experience. The union's constituents produced forces making for centralisation and dispersion. Modes of control emanated from the top and the base of the union's structure. The relationship between officials, the intermediate levels of the union and the rank and file was one of conflict alternating with co-operation. Compare the praise Clowes earned for his organisation of the unskilled in Longton with the fist fights which broke out over his stand on wage levels in 1921. The natural rhythm of the NAS's history was created by the countervailing forces within the union, both generated from across the varied membership and played out between the differing organisational levels.<sup>123</sup> Union strategy was not superimposed on an inert membership: it was as much the outcome of internal debate as it

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122. For the importance of this transition and the continuing role of skilled workers within trade unions see, E. Hobsbawm, Labour's Turning Point, pp. xv and xviii. R. Penn, 'Trade union organisation and skill in the cotton and engineering industries in Britain, 1850-1960', Social History, Vol. 8, No. 1, January 1983, pp. 37-55.

123. P. Gazette, 1 December, 1921, p.1828. cf: T. Clarke, 'The raison d'etre of trade unionism' in T. Clarke and L. Clements, Trade Unions under Capitalism (Hassocks 1978) p.17. See also R. Herding, 'Job Control and Union Structure', pp. 264 and 278 and J. Eldridge, 'Trade Unions and Bureaucratic Control', pp. 175-183 in Clarke and Clements, op.cit.

was the result of struggle with the external pressures which surrounded the union. The contradictions between the logic of collective strength and the basic desire for worker autonomy were apparent in the actions of the potter trade unionists throughout the period.<sup>124</sup> These countervailing forces and contradictions were given full expression, and indeed drawn out by the workers and union's relations with other classes and groups, both inside and outside the pottery industry.

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124. The action of the potters' union in relation to other groups will be outlined in the following chapters. For the tension in union attitudes over standard minimum wages for all workers as opposed to craft workers sanctioning sub-employment, for example, see NEC. mins. 28 October, 1915 and 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.131. See also, B. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict. Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario 1860-1914 (McGill, 1979) p.199ff.

## CHAPTER 4

Potters, Masters and Union

This chapter investigates the influence of management on the potters' experience of work and their form of trade unionism. Though dominated by the smaller unit the simple axioms regarding the paternal relations between employer and worker in such firms did not hold true for the Potteries. Management strategy in the pottery industry is contrasted with the general trends of the period leading to a revision of the prevailing orthodoxy that sees the potter master as crude and unchanging in his technique.<sup>1</sup> The means by which management attempted to control production is examined. This examination recognises the context of profit levels and relative costs; the continuing contests which arose from the production process and the role of workers and unions in the creation and evolution of managerial control. Owners employed a wide range of devices including the subtle use of welfare and paternalism yet with mixed success. The prevailing image of the pottery industry as enjoying almost totally peaceful industrial relations borders on the mythical in its simplicity. In reality, there were multiple forms of bargaining connected with pottery manufacture which were eminently suited to the stratified workforce and union which helped create them. Moreover, the period was one of industrial change for masters and workers, a fact which is amply borne out by their record of conflict.

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1. For recent studies of managerial strategy and technique and its relevance to industrial relations see: L.J. Williams, 'The Coalowners' in D. Smith (ed.), A People and Proletariat, pp.98-99. Benwell Community Project, Final Report Series No. 6, The Making of a Ruling Class (Newcastle, 1978). A. McIvor, 'Cotton employers organisation and labour relation strategies 1890-1935', Manchester University, March 1981, mimeo. D. Nelson, Managers and Workers: Origins of the New Factory System in the U.S. 1880-1920 (1975).

#### 4.1 The Pottery Firm.

It is necessary to first establish and explain what were the core characteristics of the pottery firm. In the early 20th century the most important features were size, social composition and form of ownership. Each aspect was of direct relevance to the industrial relations of the potbank and the industry.

In terms of firm size the pottery industry exhibited a wide range. At one extreme was a group of exceptionally large firms. By 1920, Cauldon's had 14 factories employing 3,000 workers. The largest firms of Wedgwood, Johnsons, Minton, Doulton, Grindley, Maddocks, Meakins, Grimwades, Copeland and Cauldon's were recognised as a 'leading sector'. These were international firms, who dominated certain markets and developed the 'best practice' techniques of the industry. Numerically they amounted to under 10% of all pottery firms and employed under a quarter of the total workforce. Within these large outfits plant size was small since production was based on craft skill and hence there was no necessary virtue in large unit size.<sup>2</sup> The period in question is generally seen as an era of 'growing concentrations of production' which stemmed from 'the logic of capitalism'. By that logic a firm strives

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2. W. Burton, evidence to Departmental C<sup>ee</sup>. on the Truck Acts, 1906, Report, Q.17077. S. Advertizer, 28 April, 1900. P. Gazette, 1 November, 1906, p.1298; 1 Sept., 1923, p.1670 and 1 Jan., 1926, p.507. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.48. Times Engineering Supplement, 21 April, 1913, p.8. The Encyclopaedia Britannica (1911), Vol. XXV, p.951. CATU COLL, L735, J. Lovatt to Twyfords, 7 April, 1913 for the differences between the smaller and larger firms. G. Manners et al, Regional Development in Britain (Chichester, 1980 2nd edn.), p.234. Victoria County History of Staffordshire, Vol. 11, p.44. U.S. Report 1915, p.389.



to lower its unit costs and to do so has to create larger units of production. In this sense the pottery firm was an exception.<sup>3</sup>

Although the leading sector firms had an influence disproportionate to their size, they were only a small part of an industry made up of almost 500 firms.<sup>4</sup> Pottery manufacture was dispersed among a large number of units. In 1911 the average potbank employed 84 workers. In 1909 a local commentator complained that 'one cause of weakness in the pottery trade is that there have been far too many manufacturers.'<sup>5</sup> At the opposite extreme to Wedgwood's or Johnsons were the back-street operations of men such as James Shaw. In 1924 he was in business on his own, 'modelled all his own creations, made his own moulds, and undertook the pottery throughout, whilst he relied upon his two daughters to undertake the decoration.'<sup>6</sup> As today, the 'penny-jack shop' provided a continuous and very easy entry to the industry. These enterprises were very short-lived with often four different occupiers, of these rented premises, within two years. This explains why the total number of firms

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3. Benwell, op.cit., p.28. Clapham, Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. III, p.212. Pollard, Development of the British Economy, pp. 10 and 62 for the sectors where unit size increase was important. Hobsbawm, Labour's Turning Point, p.xv. Meacham, A Class Apart, p.138. H. Kaelble, 'Long term changes in the recruitment of the business elite: Germany compared to the U.S., Great Britain and France since the Industrial Revolution', Journal of Social History, Spring 1980, Vol. 13, No. 3, p.419. M. Reich, D. Gordon and R. Edwards, 'A theory of labour market segmentation', American Economic Review, May 1973, Vol. 63, No. 2, pp. 359-365.

4. Kelly's Directory of 1891 lists 499 firms, Staffordshire Census, 1901, p.69, 445 (excluding bricks and tiles); Staffordshire Census, 1911, p.49, 548 and Staffordshire Census, 1921, pp. 54-55, 491.

5. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1909, p.321. British Labour Statistics (HMSO 1971), p.408 shows that in 1930 ,nationally, 87.98% of firms employed under 200 workers.

6. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1924, p.1390.

within the industry remains remarkably stable throughout the period, the periodic trade depressions and bankruptcies notwithstanding.<sup>7</sup>

As in the 19th century, many firms were found between these two extremes. The medium sized unit employed from 100 to 500 workers. These included many of the standard brand names of the industry such as Howsons (450 workers), Edmund Leigh (500) or James Kent (300). Moreover, while Mintons, Doultons might win international awards for their techniques and products, as in the Brussels fair in 1910, the small and especially medium sized firms were the backbone of the industry. The latter type of firm supplied particular product markets and each market had its own trade leaders and competitive structures. No simple distinction existed in the industry between large and small firms; the one employing high quality technology and labour, the other cheap techniques and low-paid workers. Given the craft components of production, all firms had to use skilled potters. Moreover, a number of small to medium sized firms were leaders within their own markets. Therefore craft potters and craft union groups were not only found among the larger companies but across the range of firms. Craftsmen at Tunnicliffe's (who employed under 500 and were one of the world's leading high tension porcelain manufacturers) had just as much craft pride in their product as those in the large units of Copelands or Doultons. Craft consciousness was a feature of industrial relations throughout the industry.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Gay and Smyth, The Pottery Industry, p.42. H. Moisley, 'The Potteries Coalfield', p.131. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1899, p.683 & 1 April, 1920, p.541. HMI Factories Report, 1909, p.50. 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, p.18. NSPW, Reconstruction, p.4. Fogarty, Survey of Britain, p.328. Manners, Regional Development, p.234: To-day one third of the firms employ under 100 workers.

8. C. Bailey, P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1921, p.97. Moisley, *ibid.* P. Gazette, 1 July, 1908, p.826; 1 Oct., 1910, p.1125 & 1 Jan., 1911, p.88. US Report 1915, p.389. Times Engineering Supplement, 23 April 1913, p.29. Times IFT Supplement, Pottery Section, 1917. A. Bennett, Anna of the Five Towns, pp. 115 & 116. Williams, Structure of British Industry, p.292. See also: Musson, Growth of British Industry, p.292. V. Gattrell, 'Labour, power, and the size of firms in Lancashire cotton in the second quarter of the 19th century', Economic History Review, 2nd series, 1977, Vol. xxv, No. 1, pp. 124-125.

With smaller production units common the popular notion of employer and worker cannot be easily applied to the potbank. The clear separation of owner, management and labour had not been completed by any means. Many pottery firms were run by recently or newly self-employed potters. For example, in 1898, the brothers William and Robert Stubbs raised enough capital by a sale of furniture to start up as china manufacturers in Longton. In 1906, William was drawing only £3 in salary which compared unfavourably with the wages of most firemen or modellers. Owners, such as the Stubbs, were of necessity as personally involved in production as their employees. In the same year a visitor to Thomas Cone's works found him 'actively engaged in the warehouse'. These types of masters saw themselves as self-made men. They were not absentee owners but, as H.J. Colclough, the china manufacturer, put it, 'they were self-made men who had to look personally after their business'. William Bailey, aged 54, was described as 'a concrete illustration of a self-made man' in 1913. He began at Broadhursts as an ovenman, then moved to Aynsleys as a fireman; in 1911 he set up his own firm. Edwin Wright established himself as a producer of decorated ware in 1905, was self-employed and with takings of £40 per week was in business until 1924, when debts of £123 were sufficient to bankrupt him.<sup>9</sup>

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9. S. Advertiser, 3 November, 1906, p.8. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1907, p.811; T. Forrester; 1 Oct., 1908, p.1181, F. Winkle; 1 June, 1913, p.668, W. Bailey, and 1 Nov., 1914, p.1313, F. Heath. 24 out of a sample of 100 employers taken from the Pottery Gazette were recorded as self-made men in this period. See also: H. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society, p.211.

Both contemporary and recent authors have maintained that small firms enjoyed less turbulent industrial relations. As Joyce argues for textiles 'in a shared social environment, where craft status and the social relations of craft production were still substantial realities, feelings of class opposition were noticeably absent'.<sup>10</sup> Admittedly, pottery owners 'felt it an advantage to get into direct touch, wherever possible with the personnel of the establishment' according to Mr. Ray, the proprietor of the Grosvenor works in Longton in 1922.<sup>11</sup> Yet personal contact does not preclude conflict developing between master and worker. Shadwell on a visit to Longton in 1906 found that 'there are some ninety pottery works; everyone of them was originally started by a workman, and some so lately that they are still carried on by their workman founders'. However, he went on to say that 'no men are harder taskmasters than such employers ... they have a hard struggle to succeed, and as they do not spare themselves they are not minded to spare those whom they employ'. He concluded: 'it is a delusion to suppose that workmen who "rise" have a fellow-feeling for those they leave behind'.<sup>12</sup> The very smallest pottery masters used

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10. Cadbury, Matheson and Shann, Women's Work and Wages, pp. 205-206. P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics, p.167. Burgess, The Origins of British Industrial Relations (1975), pp. 235-236 & 245. G. K. Ingham, Size of Industrial Organisation and Worker Behaviour (Cambridge, 1970) pp. 15 & 141ff.

11. P. Gazette, 1 Dec., 1922, p.1838.

12. Interview with union collector. Shadwell, Industrial Efficiency, p.308. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1910, p.1165. H. Schloss, Methods of Industrial Remuneration (1907), p.128.

some of the crudest methods of controlling production as a means of survival especially in the fiercely competitive cheap ware sectors. Equating size of firm with the degree of conflict in master/employee relations does not work. It was not that the small units were less likely to experience conflict but that the relationships between worker and employer were personal and often limited to the individuals or working group involved.<sup>13</sup> Industrial relations operated in a very small scale and bargaining was highly sub-divided, features of the potbank to which the potters' union had to adapt.

An outstanding attribute of the pottery firm was its family base. Just as the pottery workers organised their working lives with strong reference to family and kin, so did the pottery owners. In common with Britain's other staple industries the family business remained the typical form of enterprise down to 1900 and beyond.<sup>14</sup> In the Potteries it was regarded as self-evident that pottery companies were run by an owner and his family. By using a sample of 100 manufacturers' obituaries and portraits from the trade journal it was possible to test how extensive the family firm was in the period 1900-1924. Table 15 indicates that 56% of the sample were members of a family firm. The continuity of pottery making within families (though not necessarily in the same firm) is shown by the figure of 43% of the sample having followed their father or grandfather into pottery manufacture. Concrete examples are ready to hand. The Wedgwood family enterprise is well-

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13. Ingham, in loc.cit. S. Advertiser, 28 April, 1900. Workman's Times, 27 Feb., 1892. 1910 Lead C<sup>ce</sup>, Vol. III, Q.11905.

14. Allen, British Industries and their Organisation, p.12. Musson, Growth of British Industry, p.252. Payne, British Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century (1974), p.21. Burgess, Origins of British Industrial Relations, p.236. S. Pollard, The Genesis of Modern Management (1965), p.266.

known but two of the other largest firms were also run by families. Johnsons had three brothers at its head, while Meakins included grandfather, father, son and uncle in their business. The large firms were not unique in this respect as the career of Ezra Bourne shows. He worked under his father from 1868 until 1882, whereupon he joined his uncle in business. In 1890 his uncle died and so Bourne's brother-in-law John Leigh went into partnership with him. A small firm like Allerton's of Longton had relied on three generations of family management by 1906.<sup>15</sup>

The extent and persistence of the family firm in the pottery industry is explained first and foremost by its ability to supply sufficient managerial competence. Since craft organisation and sub-contract were relied on so heavily management could be relatively unsophisticated. Bakewell Bros. coped adequately with John looking after 'the commercial side' and Wilfred appointed 'manager of the works'. Secondly, four generations had been involved in many pottery companies by 1900 and had developed reasonably efficient methods of training and integrating their sons into the business. Albert Spencer began work in his father's firm when he was 13 in 1872, 'learned the trade' and spent most of his working life as manager until his two brothers succeeded him in 1913.<sup>16</sup> Thirdly, it was logical to confine management to your

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15. Gay and Smyth, The Pottery Industry, p.36, confine the family firm to only the medium size firm. J.B. Priestley, An English Journey (1934), p.221. Wedgwood's: P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1908, p.920 and A. Kelly, The Story of Wedgwood (n.d.) pp. 48-63. Johnsons: P. Gazette, 1 Mar., 1907, p.320 and Sam Clowes' Scrapbook, 15 April, 1907. Interview with W. Bell. P. Gazette, 1 Mar., 1910, p.399; 1 Feb., 1923, p.304 & 1 Mar., 1906, p.291.

16. HMI Factories Report, 1908, p.143. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1908, pp. 564 & 1 July, p.828, 1 April, 1916, p.400; 1 April, 1918, p.324 & 1 Jan., 1926, p.509. Gay and Smyth, Pottery Industry, p.36. Manners, Regional Development, p.234. Payne, British Entrepreneurship, p.27.

immediate family, if possible, in order to minimise the loss of recipes and technical knowledge and to ensure the transmission of in-house trade secrets which made your ware distinctive. Fourthly, just as pottery workers had little alternative employment but pottery, so the sons of potbank owners (except for the more wealthy) enjoyed a very limited choice of career. Strong family based management and ownership succession resulted in distinctive modes of control and labour relations.<sup>17</sup>

It has been claimed that between 1880 and 1914 the adoption of company organisation was one of the most prominent and widespread of all industrial changes. In the pottery industry this was not quite true. From a listing of pottery manufacturers of 1921, 120 out of the total of 278 or 43.17% were limited companies.<sup>18</sup> The reasons for adopting the limited form elsewhere were usually connected with obtaining increased scale, facilitating the introduction of specialist managers and separating ownership and management.<sup>19</sup> These reasons might apply to only some of the larger firms in pottery: to most, economies of scale and sophisticated management was not strictly relevant. The main reason why an increasing number of pottery firms took up private, as opposed to public, form was in order to obtain security through limited liability. It was a consolidation of traditional company form. Thomas Twyford's

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17. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1908, p.810; 1 Oct., p.1107 & 1 Nov., 1915, p.1240 and 1 Feb., 1917, p.163.

18. Pottery Gazette and Glass Trades Review Diary, 1921, pp. 71-75.

19. Ashworth, Economic History of England, p.93 and Payne, British Entrepreneurship, pp. 17-20. Clapham, Economic History of Modern Britain, Vol. III, p.204. Marshall, Industry and Trade, p.315.

Table 15Analysis of Pottery Manufacturers Obituaries and Profiles 1900-1924Source: Pottery Gazette 1900-1924.

Number of Manufacturers in sample	100
Born in Potteries	38
Born outside Potteries	5
Father, grandfather in trade	43
Family Firm	56
J.P.	24
Councillor	40
Officer of Political Organisation	10
Member/Officer of Philanthropic Body	23
Officer of Sporting or Social Body	7
Nonconformist	20
Anglican	11
Catholic	2
Lives outside Six Towns	20
Selfmade	24



'went limited' in 1896, yet in 1906 the shares in the company were still held entirely by the family and its factories were funded mainly by their own profits and reserves.<sup>20</sup> Indeed pottery owners were anxious to assure the public that though they were limited companies they were private and retained the same ownership and therefore the same reputations. As one manufacturer anxiously pointed out in 1910: 'many of the leading businesses are now, it is true, conducted under the aegis of companies, but they are not public companies, they almost all remain in the hands of the families which built them up'.<sup>21</sup> The basic tenor of the statements of the Heath family or Sydney Malkin on the assumption of company form was their rejection of change.<sup>22</sup> Ironically, to some workers the mere appearance of the label limited was deeply disturbing, smacking of outside interference. As early as 1906 a Mr. Edwards told the engravers' union that 'the old private employers had been supplanted by limited companies, for whose shareholders profits had to be made'.<sup>23</sup>

In effect the pottery firm, in terms of size, composition and ownership remained remarkably unchanged from its 19th century form. A wide range of unit size continued to exist. The average pottery firm in the early 20th century was still the small to medium sized 'bank, run by a self-made entrepreneur; owned and run by himself and his family in a partnership or private company. The manner in which firms of different

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20. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1906, p.469.

21. Op.cit., 1 April, 1910, p.434.

22. S. Advertiser, 4 May, 1907, p.7 and 10 July, 1910, p.5. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1909, p.445; 1 June, 1915, p.668 and 1 Feb., 1921, p.251. Hansard, Mr. Entwistle, 30 June, 1927, Col. 657.

23. S. Advertiser, 29 Sept., 1906, p.5.

size, status and power reacted to the events of the period diverged considerably and helped to account for the variety of forms industrial relations took in the industry. However, for most potters the immediate context for their experience of industrial relations was the small-scale, face-to-face bargaining with the master who had established and ran his own potbank.

#### 4.2 Management Strategy.

The following section is concerned with how ownership was translated into managerial strategy and control in the pottery industry. A number of conclusions have been drawn regarding the development of management technique during the period 1900-1920s. Pollard demonstrated that little attempt was made to generalise or rationalise the experience of industrial management into a science during the Industrial Revolution or until the beginning of the 20th century. He also found it difficult to isolate the managerial role from the entrepreneur's until the later period. By 1919 Marshall claimed that the 'wholesale transference of authority and responsibility from the owners of each business to salaried managers and officials' had occurred. Landes and others see the period as one of change following the increasing awareness of scientific management. Critiques of this view have stressed that Taylorism made relatively little practical impact: that British manufacturers were still operating with 19th century laissez-faire principles, although trying to develop standards of professionalism.<sup>24</sup>

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24. S. Pollard, Genesis of Modern Management, p.250. Marshall, Industry and Trade, pp. 321-328. Landes, Unbound Prometheus, p.322. Phelps-Brown, Growth of British Industrial Relations, Ch. 2, section 8. R. Bendix, Work and Authority in Industry (New York 1956), p.435. J.A. Merkle, Management and Ideology (1980) p.209. J. Child, British Management Thought (1969) p.50.

The received idea on management in the pottery industry is that it was undeveloped and of poor quality.<sup>25</sup> This view is far too sweeping. In the period 1900-1920, a lively debate centred on the nature and quality of pottery management. In 1906 some manufacturers were advocating separate training for managers. Bernard Moore, in summarising the past decade in 1910, felt there had 'been a good deal said about the application of scientific methods to business, and scientific methods in pottery in particular'. By 1914 it was contended that 'modern pottery manufacture was being rapidly transformed from an industry in which handicraft was all important' into 'an industry on the large scale'. With hindsight one can see that the assertion was overstated but it was indicative of important changes which have been overlooked. A more accurate assessment of the developments in pottery management was made by Sydney Malkin in 1922. He told the Pottery Managers and Officials Association that in the past when a manufacturer wished to cut down losses, he immediately reduced wages; now they looked more 'to managers and scientific management'.<sup>26</sup>

Large parts of management action can be related to the desire and attempts to control production whether in the form of technology, motive power, materials or labour. Bendix realised that 'subordination and discipline are indispensable in economic enterprises'. Braverman and others maintain that discipline or control was the essential human task

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25. See Chapter 1.5 above and Williams, in Structure of British Industry, p.308.

26. NSPW, Reconstruction, p.4. W. Fishley-Holland, Fifty Years a Potter, p.53. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1906, p.350; 1 June, 1910, p.78 and 1 Jan., 1922, p.116.

of the process of capitalist development. Since labour was the least predictable element of production it became necessary for management to construct regimes of discipline specifically for labour. However, given that the forces of production were closely linked this meant that control had to be exercised over technology, power, materials and labour together.<sup>27</sup>

The forms which production and therefore managerial control have taken in the past have varied widely. No simple unfolding of increased managerial control occurred. The progression has been uneven: the forces of production, especially labour, have proved to be difficult to control and the relationship between these forces has not remained constant. Different variants of managerial control have emerged depending on the circumstances. A broad distinction exists between 'formal control' and 'real control'. Formal control involves only the legal title of ownership and the claim to control production. Under real control management enjoys detailed direction and regulation of the forces of production. Real control may also appear in different degrees of sophistication. Edwards has outlined three main types: simple control by the use of foremen and piecework; technical control using machines and systems of work organisation, and finally bureaucratic control involving the construction of highly developed internal administrative hierarchies and rules.<sup>28</sup>

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27. Bendix, Work and Authority, p.ix. Braverman, Labour and Monopoly Capital. Marx, Capital, Vol. I (Moore-Aveling edn. 1912) p.165. T. Bruland review of Berg, 'Technology and Toil', in Social History, Jan. 81, Vol. 6, No. 1.

28. G.S. Jones, review of J. Foster, Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution (1974) in New Left Review, No. 89, 1975, p.54. J. Woodward & T. Reeves, 'The study of managerial control', in J. Woodward, Industrial Organization: Behaviour and Control (Oxford 1970) pp. 37-56. H. Gospel, 'The development of management structure and strategy', paper to SSRC conference on business and labour history, LSE, 23 March, 1981.

A reconstruction and explanation of the modes of control which developed in the pottery industry between 1900 and 1924 involves: firstly, identifying the main contextual influences on managerial action and how they changed; secondly, evaluating the levels of control in the industry against the typology outlined above. Thirdly, managerial control was not created in isolation. Control of production was attempted by both workers and management. In the period 1900-1924 these opposing bids for control converged around a number of issues. These included the content and nature of work itself; the official and unofficial 'welfare' benefits associated with work and the thorny question of trade unions. The characteristics of pottery manufacture which had the most immediate influence on managerial control were capital availability, profit levels, and relative costs. Pottery owners found great difficulty in attracting investment. Instead they relied on reinvested profits which led them to be labour rather than capital intensive. Control of labour, given its importance, became a prime concern. In the smaller works control was imperative since those firms could only survive by carrying as little capital as possible tied up in stock, and turning their capital over many times a year. In 1924, the average firm had to produce and sell £900 worth of goods a week before profit was earned. This meant 3,000 dozen pieces of ware per week had to be made and moved in order to realise a profit. In the smaller firm the figure was as high as 9,000. Secondly, the intensive local competition (outlined in Chapter 1) for the period 1900-19, lowered prices and profits thereby increasing the need to direct production and control

labour.<sup>29</sup> Thirdly, the necessity for controlling labour grew as manufacturers became increasingly aware of relative costs. By 1914 cost analyses of pottery manufacture showed that the traditional division of a third each to wages, material and standing charges was no longer valid. Materials by then accounted for 33.53% of total costs; fuel and power 13.11%; overheads 5.74% and labour 47.63%. Clearly there were strong reasons why management had to establish control over production but labour especially. These reasons also help explain why potbank customs such as good from oven were fought over so intensely throughout the period.<sup>30</sup>

Management control of production or labour was relatively simple compared to other industries. Given the small average unit size personal control was common. Joseph Gray, proprietor of the Britannia Works, Hanley supervised the production process from buying materials right through to selling his ware to factors. Many potbanks were 'characterised by an absence of anything like an office' in 1921. The

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29. See Chapter 1, p.49. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, pp. 197-198. Gay and Smyth, Pottery Industry, p.37ff. Lawton Hall Conference Report 1917, Manufacturers' point iii. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1909, p.321 and 1 April, 1922, p.585. F. Colonia, 'Reports of the US consuls on the Staffordshire Potteries 1883-1892', Journal of Ceramic History, No. 7, 1974, p.58. S. Advertiser, 18 April, 1908, p.5. G. Eyre Stringer, New Hall Porcelain, p.62. Board of Trade Report 1946, p.3. The rate of profit before tax but allowing for depreciation and management expenses was as follows:

1913	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920-22	1923	1924	1925	1926
6.23%	3.12	4.76	5.68	6.13	11.23	12.22	NA	11.50	9.64	8.29	5.94

based on the firm samples in the records of the manufacturers' associations in, NCPI, Mins, 20 July, 1922, p.17; 1924 Wage Inquiry, Accountant's Report, pp.3-5. CATU COLL, 1931 Wage Inquiry, p.21.

30. G. Eyre Stringer, pp. 62-63. NCPI, Mins, 7 Oct., 1925. U.S. Report 1915, pp. 405-407. Board of Trade Report 1946, p.17. P. Gazette, 1 Dec., 1924, p.2000. Cf. mining labour costs were approx. 70% of total production costs, Williams, 'The Coalowners' in People and Proletariat, p.105.

census of the same year did not separate the category of employer from manager and was indicative of the lack of bureaucratic structures of control in the industry.<sup>31</sup> Pottery owners admitted in 1920 that their industry was 'one in which there is the closest possible touch between the employer and worker'. Whilst we should be aware of the positive image which manufacturers might wish to present it does seem that even the largest companies did not have elaborate supervisory hierarchies or rules of procedure. In 1913, Thomas Watkin, one of the directors of Grimwades, wrote how he personally worked out (with the mould-maker Mr. Patterson) the shapes and prices for a new range of wares and flower pots.<sup>32</sup>

Apart from small unit size, simple control was the logical form since the family firm could comfortably supply the necessary personnel. In 1907, Robert Lewis Johnson, head of the multiplant company of the same name, used his sons to manage the Tunstall and Cobridge factories. On a smaller scale Reuben Floyd in 1914, divided supervision of his potbank between his three sons.<sup>33</sup> In spite of the debate around scientific management only the larger and more innovatory companies possessed the key to 20th century management technique, a sound costing system. W.G. Fox told the English Ceramic Society in 1916 that 'there is abundant evidence that cost taking was a minus quantity with many

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31. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1921, p.643 & 1 Dec., 1923, p.2002. CATU COLL, L426, H. Williamson to S. Clowes, 8 November, 1913. Census of England and Wales, 1921 (HMSO 1925), Industry Tables, p.215.

32. TUC Meeting and Potteries History (1905), p.22. Committee of Inquiry into the Workmen's Compensation Act 1920, Q.18706. CATU COLL, L460, Grimwades to J. Lovatt, 30 Oct., 1913. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1910, p.803. Lawton Hall Conference Report 1917, Operatives pt iv.

33. P. Gazette, 1 September, 1908, p.1074; 1 June, 1909, p.701 and 1 June, 1914, p.710. HMI Factories Report, 1908, p.143. See also P. Gazette, 1 June, 1915, pp. 759 & 783.

firms'. In 1940 it was estimated that only a third of pottery manufacturers kept costs accounts that informed them of labour and material costs for each sub-process of production.<sup>34</sup> While outsiders castigated the pottery firms for 'want of system' management relied on more implicit forms of control. Piece-work was used since the piece price was a crude mechanism for ensuring worker output: a worker could only earn a given wage by producing a set amount. Potters developed counter strategies to piece-work and so internal sub-contracting was a complementary but still simple type of labour control. Contracting had the advantages of saving managerial time, removing the need to control all workers directly and also dispersed the risks of production<sup>from</sup> owner to sub-contractor. As was shown in Chapter 2, given the pivotal role of craftsmen in the production process it was sensible for employers to rely on craft organisation. Overall managerial control was retained by ensuring that craft control was limited to very specific parts of production and therefore fragmented.<sup>35</sup> As will be shown, the use of sub-contract and piece-work was highly risky for management since their bases and terms were being continually questioned and challenged by the workers who operated them.

There were changes in the contexts in which pottery management operated during this period. Foreign competition for certain sub-industries increased, prices fell in the period 1900-1910 and during the 1920s and internal competition in the industry intensified. The

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34. P. Gazette, 1 Mar., 1916, p.283 and 1 Nov., 1915, p.1218. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.75. Board of Trade Report 1946, pp. 17-21. C.J. Noke, & H.J. Plant, Pottery. Common Commodities and Industries (1924) p.131.

35. CATU COLL, L742, A. Wilkinson to J. Lovatt, 24 April, 1914. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., p.58 and 1 May, 1909, p.579. See Chapter 2, p.74. See also, Schloss, Methods of Industrial Remuneration, p.197. Gospel, Management structure and strategy, p.5ff.



greater need for increased productivity and cost control led some manufacturers to rationalise methods and attempt to increase their real control of production. As new technology was introduced, <sup>women</sup> workers were put on the new jobs as directly paid employees of companies. Sub-contracting was diluted. In order to retain the benefits of the new technology management had to become more systematic than previously. How far this process had gone by the 1920s is suggested by the remark of B. Wethered and H. Clay that 'the old personal touch between the various sections of the industry - between master potters and operative potters, to a considerable extent had been lost owing to the organisation of modern business in limited liability companies and in large firms'.<sup>36</sup> Whilst it is difficult to quantify the increase in managerial supervision and control the opinions of the potters were broadly in agreement. In the larger or technically more advanced companies, ceramic consultants were used and the role of managers and supervisors developed and became more specialised. By 1919 pottery managers were being told that 'the art of good management ... was being able to quell efficiently and consistently control the workers'. In 1921 a manufacturer noted that 'the responsibility of the manager's position was being more and more recognised'. The difficulties of labour and raw material supplies during the 1914 -20 period led to redesigns of production and control.<sup>37</sup>

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36. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.D cf. Burgess, Challenge of Labour, p.82.

37. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1914, p.1311; 1 Oct., 1915, p.1107; 1 Oct., 1919, p.1240 and 1 Feb., 1921, p.272. CATU COLL, L390, S. Clowes to Mycott's, 23 Sept., 1914. NEC, mins, 24 Nov., 1915. G. Wilcox, Notes on White Alkaline Casting Slips, p.27. Cf. Melling, 'Non-commissioned officers', p.199ff. G. Cole, Studies in Class Structure (1955), p.39.

Admittedly these changes did not occur uniformly across the industry but the demonstration effect on workers of new managerial practices was clear. Trade unionists complained in 1924 that now they saw 'too little of the master and rather too much of the jacket men'.<sup>38</sup> There was no sharp break in management technique. Traditional forms of control co-existed alongside the new. The result was a range of managerial control methods which matched the differences in unit size, knowledge of ceramics, market location and labour supply.

However, the forms which managerial control assumed were not only the result of managerial choice. Control of production and labour especially, was the product of the interaction of management and workers. The precise nature of control emerged day by day from specific issues and contests. There were three broad areas where managerial control was focused during the period. The first concerned the issues which arose directly from work; the second centred on paternalism and the third on the question of trade unions.

The major issues which the work process yielded were wages, technology, the stratification and movement of the workforce and health. Wage payment provided a constant test of control. Pottery being labour intensive made control of the size and movement of wages imperative. Manufacturers were acutely aware of the high cost of the potter's skilled labour. For example, as one master recognised in 1908, 'the disadvantage of hand-making saggars is the large amount of skill needed', whereas 'little or no training is needed for a man to become clever at casting

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38. Hollins, Improperly Pugged Clay, passim. J. Wilcox, Notes on Whiteware Alkaline Casting Slips, p.29.

(saggars), and consequently the wages of the saggar maker can be considerably reduced'.<sup>39</sup> In the depressed trading of the 1900s and 1920s wage costs were an important area of change for manufacturers wishing to maintain profit margins and who were unable to reorganise production. Management used every possible method to control wages. They fought to maintain myriad allowances or deductions and consistently opposed minimum wage proposals. Companies would often ignore arbitration awards and take unilateral action in order to retain their control over wage costs and profit margins. In a 1920 survey of 53 earthenware firms, 34% of the operatives had not received the 5% wage advance for their trade of 1900, and 26% had never seen the 5% rise of 1911.<sup>40</sup> Wages, argued manufacturers, were to be fixed primarily by the market. In the 1908-1910 disputes, 'lifeless trade' and the strength of competition were cited by manufacturers as adequate reasons for lowering wages. Numerous forms of wage cutting were used such as not allowing apprentices to become journeymen, increasing ware sizes while leaving the piece price unchanged, or packing ovens more tightly.<sup>41</sup> It was precisely because wage control was so central to managerial cost strategy that ensured wages remained the central area of dispute and conflict.

Technology was not merely a means to more efficient production. New technology had direct impact on the detailed organisation of work, its intensity, the levels of skill, pay and status involved. The contests

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39. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1908, p.940.

40. Op.cit., 1 March, 1906, p.334. CATU COLL, L560. F. Jackson to S. Clowes, 30 May, 1913; L686, J. Stiff & Sons to J. Lovatt, 3 Jan., 1912. L58, Copelands & NSPW negotiations 18 May, 1920. HMI Factories Report, 1909, p.55. An allowance was a deduction from a wage rate.

41. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1908, p.706 and 1 Sept., 1910, p.1043. CATU COLL, L402, J. Ridgway to NAS, 14 Oct., 1912, Cf. Milne-Bailey, Trade Union Documents, TUC General Council manifesto 1923, p.415. G. Cole, The Payment of Wages (1918) p.28. A. Freeman, Boy Life and Labour, p.166. Merkle, Management and Ideology, p.225.

over new technology were not only about costs but control. During 1908 Twyford's attempted to introduce casting to a section of their sanitary works. The issues raised during this episode as workers contested the nature of casting are instructive. Technology involved new technical knowledge and therefore the pressers would have to pay, via reduced wages 'the cost of their acquiring knowledge of a business which at present they do not understand'. Craftsmen's authority was to be reduced and 'the whole of the men to be under the control of Parkes (a new foreman) who shall have power to suspend any man'. Compared to the previous forms of craft control over working times and recruitment, there were now to be 'set hours of work' and 'that only young men shall be selected and that we entirely control the selection of such men'.<sup>42</sup> In particular where craft potters proved obstructive, new technology was used by management to aggressively de-skill. Mr. Corn the manufacturer freely admitted during a strike of his hollow-ware pressers in 1911 over casting that he substituted 'colliers, farm labourers and others who had not served any apprenticeship in the potting trade'.<sup>43</sup>

Manufacturers also sought to control production by structuring and separating their workforce. One of the easiest ways, for the medium or large sized firms, to structure their labour was by constructing internal labour markets. Primary workers such as the highly skilled designers, modellers, firemen and department heads were treated quite differently from the less skilled.<sup>44</sup> They were often put on 'the staff'

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42. Bruland, in loc.cit. CATU COLL, L689 Twyford's to J. Lovatt 11 Feb., 1908. L684, J. Lovatt to Outram & Co., 8 Sept., 1911.

43. P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1911, p.1016.

44. R. Edwards et al, 'A Theory of Labour Market Segmentation', American Economic Review Vol. 63, No. 2, May 1973, pp. 359-365.

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and made permanent salaried employees as opposed to piece rate workers employed on a weekly or monthly basis. Various attachment devices were used to tie these workers to the firm. Twyfords, as early as 1896, issued shares to their 'chief staff'. Skilled workers were often prevented from moving freely between firms given their knowledge of the companies' recipes and methods. The Central Pottery in Burslem had employed Samuel Williams since he was a 17 year old apprentice. As the proprietor wrote to the secretary of his manufacturers' association in 1913, 'there is plenty of work for him but he wants to go journeyman somewhere else and we don't think it is the right thing to allow him to do so as he is now useful to us. We shall certainly not give our consent for him to leave'.<sup>45</sup> By contrast unskilled workers received little of the 'staff' benefits and were often subject to instant dismissal. As C.T. Maling & Sons stated in 1912, 'it has not been customary for us to accept, or give, our girls a week's notice'.<sup>46</sup> The workforce would also be divided on gender lines. Women were clearly used as cheap labour. Manufacturers were often able to disassemble craft jobs and increase control of work by substituting unskilled women jolliers and casters for traditional pressers and throwers. Some women were treated as casual workers with

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45. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1906, p.469 and 1 Feb., 1922, p.279. CATU COLL, L761, John Sadler & Co. to Mr. Llewellyn, 1 Aug., 1913. 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, Occupiers, p.36. NEC., Mins, 14 Oct., 1916. See also, More, Skill and the English Working Class, p.149.

46. CATU COLL, L479, J. Booth to Grindleys, 15 Jan., 1912. L486, C.T. Maling & Sons to their solicitor 16 Sept., 1912. See also L.486 and L.675. S. Advertizer, 11 Jan., 1908. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1918, p.641 and 1 March, 1926, p.595.

very few contractual privileges. Doulton's in 1908 were prosecuted for making deductions from certain of their girls' wages without any written notification or contract.<sup>47</sup>

Given the strong presence of industrial disease, the attempts by workers and trade unionists to remedy their predicament had important ramifications for profit levels and the control of work. The private and public definition of illness and its causes became an area of fierce contest. Manufacturers strived to redirect the explanations for the potters' ill health from the working conditions of the potbank towards personal, individual responsibility.<sup>48</sup> The relationship between health and profit for some owners was shown in the technical manual which stated that 'a strong (and heavier) saggar as a rule lasts longer than a very light one and it is better to tax the muscles of the kilnmen than the purse of the proprietor'. William Callear was asked at the 1911 inquiry why manufacturers had not introduced the protective regulations for their industry. It was put to him that it was a 'question of time and money'; he replied 'that is all your honour. It has never been anything else but such questions'. William Burton's arguments for the manufacturers against lower oven working temperatures was entirely commercial. He maintained that if the men's reduction was granted 'they would inflict

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47. HMI Factories, 1906, p.244; 1912, p.157 and 1919, p.10. CATU COLL, L433, Note from Hanley District C<sup>ee</sup> to central office 16 Sept. 1915. Evidence of Staffordshire pottery manufacturers to Committee on Women in Industry (1919) pp. 120-125. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1908, p.211. CATU COLL, Minutes of a Meeting of Manufacturers and Operatives, NEC, mins, 20 Oct., 1916. 1924 Wage Inquiry, Negotiations, p.5. S. Clowes found 'employers still continue to allow women to make all classes of goods and displace large numbers of men'. Cf. Drake, Women in Trade Unions, p.220. R. MacDonald, Women in the Printing Trades (1904) p.47. Cadbury, Matheson & Shann, Women's Work and Wages, p.119. A. Amsden, The Economics of Women and Work (1980), pp. 11 & 29.

48. See C. Figlio, 'Chlorosis and chronic disease in 19th century Britain', Social History, 1978, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 196-197, for employer perceptions of workers' health.

49. Binns, Ceramic Technology, p.49. 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, Qs. 636, 938, 966, 1063.

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a very severe blow on the economic condition of the industry'.<sup>49</sup> In 1920 the factory inspectorate highlighted how pottery owners refused to take responsibility for the illness generated by their manufacturing process and who instead treated 'the factory only as a financial scheme'. Manufacturers frequently used the argument of foreign competition for not changing their methods. As one owner put it, 'so long as foreign and continental potters are allowed to use lead, our potters must do the same, or be left behind'. At the same time the blame for lead poisoning was passed from owner to worker. In 1925 Ashly Myott could still publicly assert that 'I believe a great deal of lead poisoning comes about through uncleanliness on the part of the worker'.<sup>50</sup>

Underlying the arguments over health was the question of control. If it could be shown that pottery making led to ill-health, the implications for management's ability to control costs and their authority to direct their workers was immense. Reorganising production, admitting liability, paying compensation and allowing the state to regulate production were seen by manufacturers as major erosions of their authority. Pottery owners continually opposed the protective legislation for silicosis which workers' demanded. One manufacturer told the Samuel Commission in 1906, that if medical inspection was implemented 'it would simply paralyse our work'. Even when manufacturers were forced to accept a measure of government legislation they did their utmost to

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50. HMI Factories Report, 1920, p.57. Werner, Leadless Glazes, p.16.

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ensure that its detailed implementation affected their control of production as little as possible.<sup>51</sup> John Ridgway tried to shift the problem of health away from his manufacturing materials and technique to the physical and mental traits of his workers. He argued that 'the fact that women were employed in the sections it was proposed to schedule (i.e. legislate for) created a danger of malingering. Women were subject to many slight ailments and were apt to give all sorts of fancy reasons for them'.<sup>52</sup>

The second main variant of managerial control strategies involved the use of less direct and more subtle devices. Pottery owners attempted to construct a dominant image of the social relations of the potbank and thereby establish norms of behaviour for their workers to follow. Historians have recognised that conflict was not universal in industry and that management has often worked hard to elicit the co-operation and consent of workers to the pursuit of profit. Writers have been quick to use the term paternalist for this kind of management activity which was to lead to social stability. The term has been used rather loosely. It has often led to a model of social relations viewed from above; the workers' part in the relationship has been underestimated. Paternalism has been confused with general ideals rather than what happened and the label has been applied irrespective of the specific historical context. In so doing writers have minimised the importance of paternalism as an

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51. HMI Factories 1906, p.218 & 1912, p.44. Werner, op.cit., p.12. Hansard, 26 June, 1911, Col.291, C. Wedgwood. PRO.HO.45/1018/B12393P, Letter from W. Burton to Home Office, 8 June, 1900. CATU COLL, L395, Meakins to employee, 15 May, 1913. Report of the Samuel Commission 1906, Q.6929, W. Burton. CATU COLL, 1920 negotiations notes, p.3. S. Advertizer, 30 March, 1907, p.7. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1906, p.188 & 1 Jan., 1910, pp. 55 & 88. A. Meikeljohn, Silicosis (Hanley 1933) p.5.

52. S. Advertizer, 23 June 1906, p.7. W. Burton, PRO, H045 in loc.cit.



ideology of work and as a critical force in the relations between master and worker.<sup>53</sup>

In the Potteries the existence of paternal forms of management was often noticed. In 1908 one observer remarked of the industry, 'like master like men is an established maxim here'. In 1920 a captain Sydenham from the Ministry of Labour thought that 'employers in the pottery industry were still in direct personal contact with their workmen to an extent that was unknown in many other industries'.<sup>54</sup> However, the exact relevance and forms of paternalism in the pottery industry from 1900-1924, requires a reconstruction of both management assertions and action, along with the response of pottery workers.

Apparently certain employers did seek to build up personal relations with workers. The depth of that relationship could be quite shallow, no more than the occasional exchange of a greeting. Employers certainly made use of the appearance of those relationships. W. Bishop of Bishop & Stonier, after an accident to his miller George Beaumont in 1909, drew the tension out of the situation by publicly proclaiming his 'high regard for the deceased and his relations, whom they had known for many years'.<sup>55</sup> Frederick Parkin found that such relationships with owners could also be vehicles for exploitation. Masters' provision of worker

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53. See for example Fox, A History of the National Union of Boot & Shoe Operatives, p.315. P. Spaven, 'Main gates of protest' in Harrison, Independent Collier, p.225. J. Reynolds and K. Laybourn, 'The emergence of the independent labour party in Bradford', International Review of Social History, Vol. xx, 1975, Part 3, p.316. For detailed examinations of paternalism see: D. Roberts, Paternalism in Early Victorian England (1979) p.2ff. P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics, pp. 111, 138, 164, 170 and 179-180 for the 'gift relationship' and the observation that paternalism existed within limits set by laissez-faire. E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English society: class struggle without class?', Social History, May 1978, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 133ff.

54. J.B. Priestley, English Journey, p.202. V. Brittain, Testament of Youth. An autobiographical Study of the Years 1900-1925 (1978 edn.) p.19. A.H. Morgan, 'Regional Consciousness in the North Staffordshire Potteries' Geography, March, 1942, pp. 99-100. P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1908, p.1065 & 1 Feb., 1920, p.191.

55. Lord Hatherton papers, SRO.1879, W. Owen, 22 Nov. 1879. S. Advertiser, 7 Aug., 1909, p.5.

housing was double-edged. On the one hand this fits in well with Roberts' notion of obligation within paternalism yet besides binding workers to a company, housing provision could also be used as a sanction. J. Bowden, after a dispute at his potbank was forced to leave his company house on 15 January, 1920.<sup>56</sup> Employers also made individual arrangements with workers during stoppages and lay-offs to pay part of their wages in advance. But during the 1921 coal strike it was noted how owners made use of this device 'to look after skilled craftsmen' not their total workforce.<sup>57</sup> Clearly, these personal relations alone could not guarantee worker co-operation.

More grand were the public rituals which manufacturers used to display their ideology of 'common interest' with the employee as the provider of work. Bendix saw manufacturer ideologies as vital in his model of British paternalism. He argued that masters constructed ideologies which interpreted management authority in a positive way and neutralised conflict.<sup>58</sup> In the pottery industry the manufacturer's images of work were exhibited in two main ways: the social events of the potbank and the long service presentations. The object of these exercises was to minimise the contradictions within the wage bargain and instead highlight the moral duty of worker to employer. As Mr. Fielding told his workforce while presenting 19 employees with presentations for 21 years service: 'These were people who thought not

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56. F. Parkin, *Autobiography*, p.XII. CATU COLL, L126, J. Bowden to NSPW, 15 Jan., 1920. Roberts, *Paternalism*, pp. 2-4, 173.

57. *P. Gazette*, 1 June, 1921, p.940.

58. Bendix, *Work and Authority*, p.13.

simply of the f. s. d. question but who showed an appreciation of loyal service and had aims which were apparently above simple money making'.<sup>59</sup> Some owners tried to establish the appearance of a natural succession of family workers. The managing director of Bullers in 1919 spoke to his workers of how many instances there were of three generations working together on his works. He remarked that 'when people had been with them through all their boyhood and manhood, girlhood and womanhood, that they had the desire to bring their children and their children's children there'. Presentations were routinely made for 25 to 50 years' service with the same company. The family atmosphere of the potbank was fostered with certain workers' weddings, promotions and retirements marked by employer gifts and collections among the workers.<sup>60</sup>

The social events organised by owners symbolised what they saw as the acceptable codes of worker behaviour. Table 16 indicates that almost 60 firms were formally recorded as organising a range of social activities for their workforces. These included celebrations of employers or their family marrying; marking the majority of an owner's son or the wedding anniversaries of the master; and a mixture of works outings, concerts, whist drives and so on.<sup>61</sup> The ideological component of these activities was striking. The foreword to the programme of T.C. Wild's & Co.'s party at Longton Town Hall in 1919 read:

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59. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1911, p.1155; 1 July, 1919, p.743; 1 April, 1922, p.607 and 1 March, 1908, p.349.

60. Op.cit., 1 Jan., 1911, p.89; 1 Aug., 1916, p.849; 1 July, 1918, p.562; 1 Oct., 1919, p.1109 and 1 Jan., 1920, p.94.

61. Op.cit. Marriages: 1 March, 1906, p.353 & 1 July, 1909, local correspondent. Outings: 1 Oct., 1906, p.1179; 1 Oct., 1908, p.1181 and 1 July, 1911, p.812. Anniversaries: 1 July, 1910, p.804, Mr. and Mrs. T.C. Wild entertained their entire workforce to a tea and concert on the occasion of their silver wedding. Whist drives and concerts: 1 Jan., p.520 and 1 March, 1926, p.595.

Table 16

Social Activities of Pottery Firms 1900-1924Source: Pottery Gazette, 1900-1924.

Firm.	Presentation to Employer	Presentation to Worker(s)	Outings	Concert, Dances, Whist Drive.	Dinner/Tea Parties	Firm	Presentation to Employer	Presentation to Worker(s)	Outings	Concert, Dances, Whist Drive.	Dinner/Tea Parties
A Woods. (Longport).	2			1		Howsons			1 <sup>A</sup>		1
Gr. Morley's (Fenton).	1		1			Barkers	1				1
R. Audley. New Hall Pott. Co.			2		1	E Hughes & Son	2				
Gr. Woolcroft & Sons.	1					Bains	1				1
Blyth Porcelain Co.	1		3		1	Wildblood, Heath & Co	2				1
Johnson Bros.	1		4	3	1 <sup>A</sup>	Gr Jones	1				3 <sup>A</sup>
Ogden & Co.	1					J Reeves & Son		1			
Gibsons	1	3	1			Harrison & Sons			1 <sup>A</sup>		
Grindleys.				1	1	J Gimson & Co			1		
Hammersley's	1					Winkle & Co.	1			1	
Allertons	1	1	1		2 <sup>A</sup>	Fieldings		1			
Harold P. Kent.	1					Wade & Co		1			
Bullers.	2					Crown Staffs. Porcelain				1	
Bishop & Stonier	1	1				Collingwoods		1			
Aynueys	1	1	1	1		Adams	1				
Booths	1				5 <sup>A</sup>	Globe Pottery	1				
Wengers					1 <sup>A</sup>	Dean & Lowe's		1			
Twyfords		1				Taylor Tunnicliffe	1				
Copelands	2	1		3	3 <sup>A</sup>	Redfern & Drakeford			1		
Edwards & Co.	1		1			Grater Hall					1
Campbells	1		1			King & Barratt					1
Meakins	2	1				Malkins					1
Wedgwoods	1	6	1			A. Gr. Harley Jones			1		
T. Forrester & Sons.	1		1			Paragon China Co.			1 <sup>A</sup>		
Grimwades			1	1		Royal Doulton		1			1
Cauldon		1	1			Dudson, Wilcox & Till	1				
Catclough's	1				1 <sup>A</sup>	Gladstone (Procter & Co.)		1 <sup>A</sup>	1		
Colton's	1		2 <sup>A</sup>			Diamond Pottery Co.	1				
Goss			2 <sup>A</sup>			Minton, Hollins & Co.			1		

<sup>A</sup> = Annual

A bond of comradeship and sympathy happily exists among us, which is most gratifying to those whose duty it is to guide the policy and manage the affairs of our various businesses ... So long as we all work together harmoniously, and with the same spirit of mutual respect and goodwill we may look with great confidence to the future.

Similarly at a Gibson's social evening in 1906 it was declared that 'the firm recognised that they were supported in their efforts by reasonable workpeople'. The workers of A. Harley-Jones were told during their day trip to Chester that 'the way in which they could best repay their employer for his generosity was to do their duty at the works'. The images involved in these events were important. Some of the largest manufacturers invited workers to the grounds of their home as an annual treat, where the owners 'presided' over the 'guests'. These occasions often reinforced the larger firm's internal labour market as separate events were held for managers and officials, distinct from the production workers.

The pottery owners' paternalism did not remain unchanged during our period. Joyce asserts that paternalism broke down by 1900.<sup>64</sup> In the Potteries, paternalist policies still operated in the 1920s. The change occurred in the content and emphasis of such strategies. In the late 19th and early 20th century paternalism was based on largely individual, informal employer benevolence and worker's duties. By 1920 the use of paternalism as a tool of managerial control had become more

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62. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1919, p.64.

63. S. Advertizer, 13 Jan., 1906, p.4. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1920, p.1075. Booth's 'Staff Dinner' of 1908 was at the Arms Hotel for 'management and officials only', 1 Jan., 1909, p.93 and 1 April, p.468. In 1910 Johnson's 'managerial staff' went on a 'separate outing to Batterton Hall' from the rest of the workers, 1 Oct., 1910, p.1165.

64. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics, pp. 186 and 338.

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rational and formally defined. Instead of being based on the responsibility of the rich to the poor and as union bargaining increased in scope, the guiding notion became one of rational efficiency: the need was for efficient production and enhanced productivity. As in other industries, the shift in approach was labelled welfarism.<sup>65</sup> As one pottery owner argued in April 1920, there was now a need 'to devote a very real attention not to the mechanics of industry, but to its humanics'. The potters' campaigns over industrial illness and the need to reorganise production during the war led to a recognition by manufacturers that efficiency and welfare were closely related. Many of the larger works built 'Rest and Health' recreation clubs and 'welfare institutes' run formally by rules and committees.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, welfarism was used by manufacturers to prevent government intervention in their industry. The retention of managerial control over welfare schemes runs throughout the pottery manufacturers' responses to government inquiries. John Ridgway therefore opposed the National Insurance Bill in July 1911 on the grounds that his own sick club scheme was better suited to his company.<sup>67</sup>

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65. Shadwell, Industrial Efficiency, p.173. Merkle, Management and Ideology, pp. 229-230. S. Rowbotham, Hidden from History, p.59. J. Melling, 'Employers, industrial welfare and the struggle for workplace control in British industry, 1880-1920', memo, 1981. A. Davin, 'Imperialism and motherhood', pp. 49-55. K. Coates and T. Topham, Workers' Control, p.xxxvii.

66. R.G. Hyde to NCPI, P. Gazette, 1 May, 1920, pp. 650 & 664 & 1 Aug., p.1052; 1 July, 1919, p.741 (Grimwades) and 1 March, 1922, p.406. HMI Factories Report, 1917. NCPI Mins., 2 Oct., 1922. H.J. Plant in Werner, Leadless Glazes, p.12. Copeland archives, 788 Wallet, Rules of Sick Club.

67. 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup>, Q.14995. Samuel Commission 1908, Q.2034 & 6929. Inquiry into Workmen's Compensation Act, Q.18641. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1911, p.812 & 1 Feb., 1923, p.308. For the general reaction of employers in Britain to welfare legislation see R. Hay, 'Employers and social policy in Britain: the evolution of welfare legislation, 1905-1914', Social History, Jan., 1977, No. 4, pp. 435-455. Cf. B. Seebohm Rowntree, The Human Factor in Business (1921).

Whilst it is possible to construct a picture of strong attempts by pottery manufacturers to develop paternalist or welfare based strategies as a means of securing worker co-operation and a stable workforce, the crucial test is the actions of the pottery operatives. Some workers did respond to paternal acts with deference.<sup>68</sup> It is noticeable how employer gifts were repaid. In 1906 the employees of William Morley entertained his son Gordon on the occasion of his majority in the potbank warehouse, where workers made speeches regarding the esteem they held Mr. Gordon in and the goodwill which existed between them. Though owners might wish to magnify these events, the actions of workers towards their employers are well-recorded. In 1910, the workers at Bain & Co. celebrated the homecoming from a world tour of Elijah Bain's son. The female operatives presented Mrs. Bain with a gold brooch and the oldest male employee made the gift of a gold topped walking stick to William Bain. The inscriptions on such presents are indicative. The lettering on a gift to the Jarvis family from their workers recorded that it was to mark 'the cordial relationship which existed between them'. Workers even supported their masters in rejecting the national health schemes and asking for their own sick clubs to be returned.<sup>69</sup>

Owners expended great energy to legitimate their ownership and authority in the workplace and tried vigorously to ensure an identification of interests between master and worker. Yet these are not sufficient

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68. Meacham, A Class Apart, p.21. See also Engels' remarks on the 'inborn respect' of the British worker, in Marx and Engels on Britain (Moscow 1962) as quoted in H. Moorhouse, 'The Marxist theory of the labour aristocracy', footnote 38.

69. P. Gazette, 1 April, p.566, 1 June, p.706, 1 Oct., p.1164, 1 Nov., 1906, p.1278; 1 May, 1909, p.568; 1 Sept., 1910, p.1044; 1 June, 1915, p.783 and 1 Sept., p.1011, 1 April, 1917, p.409; 1 Aug., 1923, p.1339, 1 Feb., 1924, p.320 and 1 Feb., 1923, p.308.

reasons for why they should inevitably succeed. Firstly, as we have seen, manufacturers used less subtle means of control such as wage cutting and the increasing use of foremen which could not be masked by whist drives and presentations. Secondly, many casual and unskilled workers were omitted from these events. Thirdly, above all, the ideologies and imagery offered by management was often just that: workers could still make an independent choice and interpretation of these activities. Whilst it was clearly in the interest of workers to participate in paternal relationships the sources of conflict arising from work remained plentiful. The experience of the struggles for family survival in the 1900s could not be easily wiped out by an owner's tea-party. One example indicates how fragile paternalist relations could be. In September 1919 the New Hall Porcelain Company took its workers to Blackpool for the day. During speeches that evening much was made of the longevity of service of women employees (one was 80 and still working). Two months later, in December, the entire workforce came out on strike over the stoppages made by the company out of the women workers' wages: the women won the strike.<sup>70</sup>

The third main area where managerial control was tested and modified was in the relations between companies and unions. The concern here is with the manufacturers at the individual firm level. Pottery management did not simply reject the rights of unions to represent workers. On the contrary there were ways in which management accepted certain union activities as complementary to their own policies. Proprietors' attitudes

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70. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1919, p.1109 and 1 Jan., 1920, p.94. Cf. Gray, Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh, pp. 1-6. Bendix, Work and Authority, p.445, for the difference between managerial appeals for co-operation and worker perceptions. See also Chapter 5.1 below for employer attempts to influence their workers outside the factory.



towards unionism varied according to the areas of union activity involved and the changing contexts in which they occurred. As Walker put it, union 'recognition is, however, a habit of mind and a continuous relationship as much as a once and for all publicly conferred capitulation'.<sup>71</sup>

There were very specific ways in which pottery management rejected union activity on their potbanks. The obstruction often derived from managers or supervisors whose ability to control their workers was made especially difficult by union agents. Owners were often quite prepared to deal with union representatives. For example in January 1911, a union organiser visited Furnivals over a disputed payment to Charles Poole. The manager, S. Rowley 'refused to deal with the Trade Union although he said he had respect for the leaders personally', according to a letter by Joseph Lovatt.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, Johnsons met the union leadership but would not allow organisers on their works. Management apparently did not reject the union as a general spokesman for the pottery workers but objected to direct union intervention in the questions which directly affected control of production. In 1916 H.J. Plant recognised the NAS yet wrote to Sam Clowes indignant that a union canvasser had set foot on his works. As Mr. Plant put it, 'personally, I consider it to be a case of impudent interference in our private business'.<sup>73</sup> Bakewell Bros. in 1926 saw no reason for the union to be involved in the dismissal of a

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71. Walker, Juteopolis, pp. 292 & 313. Cf.: Phelps-Brown, p.279. Clegg, Industrial Relations, pp. 162-163. Price, Masters, Union and Men, pp. 193-194. I. Boraston, H. Clegg, M. Rimmer, Workplace and Union (1975), p.180. For the collective relations of manufacturers and the unions see sec. 4.3.

72. CATU COLL, LG17, J. Lovatt, 16 Jan., 1911, to A. Llewellyn.

73. CATU COLL, L560 F. Jackson to S. Clowes, 30 May, 1913. L554 H.J. Plant to S. Clowes, 7 January, 1916.

saucer tower. Wileman's of Longton wished to preserve the direct contact and control of their workforce with no intervening union representative. Only the most extreme of the well-established firms totally rejected the unions, as with F. Benham who wanted all disputes between master and worker settled by law.<sup>74</sup>

Against these rejections of union legitimacy it is possible to set the varieties of acceptance. Three main sources were used in order to draw up a measure of the extent of union recognition. The union's correspondence files indicated who officially dealt with the NAS. The union price count records were derived from access to firms: the union's records of official notices received from firms indicated the companies who dealt formally with the union. Clearly these sources do not capture the fullest extent of the firms involved but they do provide an estimate. In broad terms it appears that between around 30% of the firms in the pottery industry had recognised the potters' union, by establishing bargaining procedures by 1920. The three sets of records also indicate that the medium to large, well established firms (with notable exceptions such as Cauldon's) had individually accepted, even in a limited way, the presence of the potters' union.<sup>75</sup>

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74. In loc.cit., L88, Bakewell Bros. to NSPW. 10 Dec., 1926. L182 F. Wileman & Co. to S. Clowes 26 Oct., 1915. F.R. Beham, Royal Commission in Trade Disputes (1904) Q. 4979.

75. CATU COLL, L199, A. Johnson to NSPW, 20 Feb., 1923. Union letter collection shows that 116 (29%) firms recognised the union in this period out of 400 pottery firms (excluding brick companies) or 41% of the 1921 Pottery Gazette and Glass Trades Review list of 278 officially recorded companies. The financial ledger notices for 1911 give a total of 116 firms who recognised the union; the union price lists name 83 firms. In Tunstall, 32.14% of the firms appear to have recognised the union; in Burslem 28.13%; in Hanley 23.23%; in Stoke 32.6%; in Fenton 8.10% and in Longton 29.41%.

From around 1910 onwards, in the context of expanding trade, individual companies increasingly recognised the use of trade unions. By the 1920s some of the larger companies were frequently exchanging information with the NAS. Meakins and the Campbell Co. were routinely sending the union's central office schedules of price changes and copies of settlements in their workshops.<sup>76</sup> Certain firms believed they could use the union officials to help control their workforce. The manager of the Midland Pottery Co. wrote to Lovatt in June 1913 over the irregular attendance of his workers asking him 'to take your members in hand'. As the union grew in size during the period it became one of the best sources of specialist labour as Peake Co. found in 1911, when they were short of jiggerers.<sup>77</sup> Edmund Leigh, one of the more prominent manufacturers, felt that weak trade unionism was dangerous for the industry.<sup>78</sup> Only a united, recognised trade union could carry out what it agreed with manufacturers and therefore provide a stable basis for industrial relations. It is noticeable that employers rejected unions from outside the Potteries almost entirely. Moreover, the recognition of the union often came to depend on quite personal friendships between manufacturers and officials as the correspondence of Frank Williamson and Sam Clowes showed.<sup>79</sup> One distinction remained between the smaller firms and the rest. The smallest potbanks could not afford to operate

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76. CATU COLL, L221 Minton's to NSPW, 26 April 1923 stated 'we enclose herewith a copy of the settlement arrived at in respect of various departments in our Factory'. L222 Campbell Co. to NSPW, 26 April 1923. Compare these letters with the chaos of informal rate fixing and rolling, weekly debts in HMI Factories Report 1906, p.238.

77. CATU COLL, L428 Midland Pottery Co to J. Lovatt, 19 June 1913. L429 Melling Pottery Co to J. Lovatt, 12 July 1913. L683, J. Peake & Co to J. Lovatt, 18 Nov., 1911.

78. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1906, p.920.

79. NCPI, Mins, 17 Oct., 1917. CATU COLL, L426, H. Williamson & Son to S. Clowes, 8 November, 1913.

under union regulations and did their best to avoid formal bargaining commitments. Finally in times of trade depression and over major issues of change as in the 1900s and 1920s, all manufacturers were capable of demolishing existing relations and tearing up union agreements.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4.3 The Industrial Relations of Pottery Manufacture I:

##### Bargaining.

The industrial relations of pottery manufacture have been greatly misunderstood. An orthodox view exists which characterises the industry as almost conflict free, stable and unchanging. The object of the following two sections is to fundamentally revise the existing interpretation. Firstly, an examination follows of the terminology and concepts relevant to a study of industrial relations in the industry. Secondly, by using these insights it will be possible to reconstruct how bargaining occurred on multiple levels, appropriate to the complex division of labour, the fragmented union structure and the range of managerial strategy. Thirdly, between 1900 and 1924 the pottery industry underwent arguably the most important changes in both union and employer organisation and bargaining in its history. Finally in contrast to the accepted accounts the era was in fact one of continuing and widespread conflict.

Clegg and others have defined industrial relations as the study of the rules governing employment. Collective bargaining then becomes the bargaining over such rules between trade unions and employers, as well as the making, interpretation and administration of employment rules.

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80. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1910, p.1165 & 1 Sept., 1923, p.1501. CATU COLL, L520, negotiating notes S. Clowes, 2 Nov., 1921.

Early writers saw the history of trade unionism as the history of the development of collective bargaining.<sup>81</sup> Historians have been critical of this institutional approach which ignores workers' ability to think and act independently, omits social pressures and reduces the study of industrial relations to formal bargaining structures and procedures.<sup>82</sup> For some authors the starting point for examining industrial relations is the exchange relationship, whereby property owners buy labour and the property-less class sells it. The basic disparity between the buyer and seller makes conflict inevitable. It will be argued that an understanding of industrial relations requires a study of both the structural determinants as well as the experience of those involved. The dynamic of industrial relations was a struggle for power and authority. The attempts by employers to subordinate labour in turn led to resistance and challenge by workers in a continuous struggle for control of work.<sup>83</sup>

The pottery industry confirms the well-known picture of the disorder and complexity of British Industrial relations.<sup>84</sup> A Ministry of Labour enquiry in 1917 was perplexed at the extreme range of bargaining forms. It was said of the 1908 disputes that 'among the whole body of manufacturers

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81. H. Clegg, The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain (Oxford, 1979) pp. 1-3. Rowe, Wages in Practice and Theory, p.121. See also, R. Charles, The Development of Industrial Relations in Britain, 1911-1939 (1973).

82. Cronin, Industrial Conflict, pp. 23-26. Hyman, Strikes, pp. 66-68. J. Rubery, 'Structured labour markets, worker organisation and low pay,' Cambridge Journal of Economics, March 1978, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 17-36.

83. Burgess, Origins of British Industrial Relations, pp. ii-iii. Price, Masters, Unions and Men, pp. 5 & 22.

84. Burgess, op.cit., pp. 235 & 252. Clegg, op.cit., p.15. For the greater uniformity of US pottery industry bargaining see McCabe, National Collective Bargaining in the Pottery Industry (Baltimore, 1932), passim and P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1920, p.43.

it would be difficult to find half a dozen who had received a precisely similar set of notices'.<sup>85</sup> The sectionalism of the pottery companies, workforce and unions were reproduced by the variegated pattern of their industrial relations. The Donovan Commission of 1974 reported on what most workers had always known, in industrial relations two modes are in operation: the informal and the formal. The informal relations are those between workers or unionists and employers in the workshop or plant, as opposed to the formal level where unions and employers bargain in a regional, industrial or national setting. The informal level involves customary, often unwritten understandings; the formal relies on written agreements. This perspective provides a key insight into how potters experienced and organised their particular form of bargaining. However, the distinctive feature of the pottery industry's industrial relations and indeed the main explanation for the pattern of conflict during the period was the multiple levels at which bargaining operated.<sup>86</sup>

Five levels of bargaining were distinguishable in pottery, each with its own set of participants. The levels ranged from the individual or workshop level to the plant, the occupational group, the sub-industry or the industry wide. Phelps-Brown concluded for the 1900s that 'four out of five employees made their own bargains' and how 'the immediate relations between employer and employed at the place of work remained remarkably unregulated'.<sup>87</sup> It was entirely consistent with the social

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85. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1917, p.480 and NCPI, Mins, 18 July 1921. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1908, p.347.

86. Clegg, Industrial Relations, p.15. Boraston et al, Workplace and Union, p.165. E. Batstone, I. Boraston, S. Frenkel, The Social Organisation of Strikes (Oxford, 1978) p.14.

87. Phelps-Brown, Growth of British Industrial Relations, pp. xxvi & 279. Batstone et al, op.cit., pp. 32 and 55. Clegg, op.cit., pp. 42 and 53. Cole, Payment of Wages, p.90.

relations of the potbank that bargaining was predominantly between the individual or workgroup and the employer. A sample of the union's dispute files shows almost 80% of the bargaining problems related to individual companies. In a second sample of disputes, 35.42% of the disputes involved individual potters and 47.92% workgroups. As these figures suggest, localised and informal bargaining was widespread and almost certainly the most common means of experiencing industrial relations for a potter.<sup>88</sup>

Three main reasons underlay the prevalence of this small-scale bargaining. Management clearly found it easier to deal with relatively isolated individuals or workshops rather than tackle questions affecting a whole potbank. In October 1908 Cauldon's issued notice to everyone of its employees telling them that 'every one employed on these works will be under one month's notice from this date ... during the month each person will be seen with a view to possible rearrangement of their work and wages'.<sup>89</sup> The technical differences between occupations in the potbank meant that common problems and issues did not readily present themselves. In addition, the piece-rate system reinforced the individual basis of bargaining since it relied on the pricing of single items produced by one worker or small group. Owners had developed this form of bargaining into an art form almost from the annual hiring system of the 19th century. Manufacturers used individual notices for each

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88. Out of a sample of 393 clearly recorded bargaining episodes, 313 (79.64%) involved only a single firm, 78 (20.36%) concerned manufacturers' organisations or groups of companies. Of a sample of 288 recorded disputes 102 (35.42%) related to individual workers; 138 (47.92%) to workgroups; 17 (5.9%) to a whole factory; 25 (8.68%) to a collection of workers across a sub-industry and 6 (2.08%) related to an entire sub-industry.

89. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1908, p.1315.

employee as a means of preventing bargaining points becoming of wider relevance.<sup>90</sup> In 1924 Sam Clowes complained about 'this batch of individual notices which have been issued by the employers' since 'it would require a Standing Joint Committee to sit every day to deal with these notices'. In 1908, it was estimated that 16,000 workers had given in notices to their employers and after the 1911 arbitration board 3,000 notices were still being negotiated. Even when industry-wide bargaining became more established later in the period the following months were taken up with hosts of individual bargains on the potbanks as each worker translated the award into figures related to his ware pattern, size and workshop custom.<sup>91</sup>

The workgroup form of bargaining sprang naturally from the primary social groups which made up the division of labour in the potbank. In the 1920s the seven mould makers at Twyfords formed a separate bargaining group for both their employer and the union. Each small collection of workers wrestled with the issues and problems specific to their workshop, which were not easily transferable or understood by other groups. For example, in November 1913 Cauldon's enamellers in one dispute negotiated over their pattern difficulties, low prices, management recognition and the alteration of apprentice allowances.<sup>92</sup> Certain

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90. CATU COLL: L450, 13 Dec., 1919, dipper to central office. L630, case of John Forrester, presser, 9 June 1910, Furnivals. L724, sanitary presser, 26 Jan., 1912. L568a & b, individual notices handed to Mr. Wakefield and Mr. Utting, turners, 10 Feb., 1923. Cf. Cole, Payment of Wages, p.5. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, p.149.

91. CATU COLL: L497, S. Clowes conference notes 3 March, 1924. A standing joint committee refers to the conciliation device of two employers and two unionists deciding over disputed prices. 1920 Wage negotiations statement, para. 5 and wage settlement p.2. 1924 Accountant's Report p.10. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1911, pp. 453-454.

92. CATU COLL: L572 group of Twyford's mould makers 14 Jan., 1920. L489, workgroup led by A. Chaney and J. Savage at Copelands to J. Lovatt, 14 Feb., 1924. L473, Cauldon's enamellers, 12 Nov., 1913.



women's occupational groups also developed similar bargaining techniques, especially among the skilled lithographers, transferrers and paintresses. Group modes of bargaining were the natural extensions of the strength of workgroup control. The new occupations created during the 1900s, such as casters, developed bargaining forms and techniques similar to the traditional, existing forms.<sup>93</sup>

The prevalence of small-scale, individual or workshop bargaining meant that this level occupied the majority of the unions activity throughout the period. This local form of negotiating was the most direct contact point with union action for most potters. In April 1923, the jiggers and jolliers of Minton's, according to the manager, when asked to sign a settlement 'refused to sign the same, unless it has previously been submitted to the Union'.<sup>94</sup> Moreover it was from these localised workgroup questions that many of the larger industry wide disputes developed. The sanitary pressers' dispute of 1907 grew originally from the introduction of one article on a single potbank. Even in the 1920s, when supposedly more formal systems of negotiation were in operation, the head office of the union was still directing that 'all individual notices on both sides to be dealt with at the factories concerned'. The small-scale forms of bargaining were so entrenched that when the union and manufacturers tried to establish a single, fixed, annual settlement date many workgroups were unable and unwilling to keep to such a uniform procedure.<sup>95</sup>

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93. In loc.cit. L601, hollow ware pressers 24 Aug. 1911. L310 R. Houson & Co's slip makers 15 Nov., 1916. L567, Wedgwood's liners 20 Sept., 1923. L52 female throwers Bourne & Son, 28 Feb, 1916.

94. L220 Minton's jiggerers and jolliers to S. Clowes 25 April, 1923.

95. Sam Clowes' scrapbook, 21 March, 1907. L153, J. Lovatt to J. Howard, 11 Feb., n.d. L441, J. Stevenson on behalf of 6 warehouse workers, 15 Dec., 1919. See also L437 & L550. NEC mins, 15 April, 1916, 26 Oct., 1916. Emergency C<sup>ee</sup> Minute Book, 20 March, 1923, p.73. NEC mins, 17 Feb., 1923 and 24 Oct., 1925.

British trade unionism has exhibited a strong factory consciousness according to some writers.<sup>96</sup> In the pottery industry while union and worker action occurred mainly within the factory it seldom concerned the whole workforce of a potbank. The division of labour separated the workers while relatively few issues arose which were common to all the workshops on the potbank. Differences in skill, status and work experience militated against factory-based action. Of the 72 recorded issues which arose between Grindley's and the union in 1912-1913 or the 20 subjects arising at Johnsons none relate to disputes involving all the workforce of a plant.<sup>97</sup> Only when an issue was seen by all workers to be a common threat did a potbank workforce mobilise, as happened at the New Hall works in 1920 over arbitrary wage deductions from a group of women workers.<sup>98</sup> Clearly the reason for the failure of the National Council of the Pottery Industry sponsored works committees after 1918 lay in their attempt to erect an inherently illogical institution with no real social base.<sup>99</sup>

By contrast the occupational group within an area provided a remarkably strong basis for bargaining. This level of bargaining was based on the common interests of a single occupation or 'calling' drawn

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96. Bell, in Flanders and Clegg, The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain, p.246. Beynon, Working for Ford, p.98.

97. M. Jones, Potbank (1961) pp. 162-165. L376 Grindley's file, L384 Johnson's file. See also D25, 'Rates of Pay at Melling pottery 1913-1916'. For examples of workers' 'pricing committees' within firms see S. Clowes scrapbook, 21 & 30 March, 1907.

98. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1920, p.94.

99. L573, Worcester works joint wage demand, 11 May 1919. NCPI, mins, 10 Mar., 1922; 15 Sept., 1920 and 19 Mar., 1924. W. Machin found that managers in particular were very suspicious of works committees as a threat to their authority, P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1920, p.191.

from a number of potbanks in a particular district. It was far easier to establish common prices and practices for a single occupation in an area than to attempt to combine the divergent interests of widely different occupations in a potbank. It was entirely natural for flat pressers to pool their resources with other flat pressers locally, given their common vocabulary and the broad similarity of the technical problems they faced. Although the union dispute files show that under 10% of bargaining activity took place at this level, the figure must be qualified.<sup>100</sup> The actions of the occupational groups may have been quantitatively small but in qualitative terms their impact was far greater. As our analysis of union structure showed,<sup>101</sup> the skilled occupational groups did not need or ask for official union intervention in their bargaining. Their activities were less frequent than the workshop level since they were fewer in number. Tactically, the occupational group of an area only mobilised when questions of sufficiently common importance arose. For example, the sanitary pressers committee for Hanley was exceptionally strong and by 1914 had established bargaining and monitoring procedures with the principal sanitary firms. The saggarmakers of Burslem and Tunstall acted in a similar way. The strength of their occupational consciousness is shown in their letter to the NEC in 1920 which explained their new area price list: 'Mainly our idea has been to supply a long felt want for a definite list of sizes ... We should think that the saggarmakers should be called

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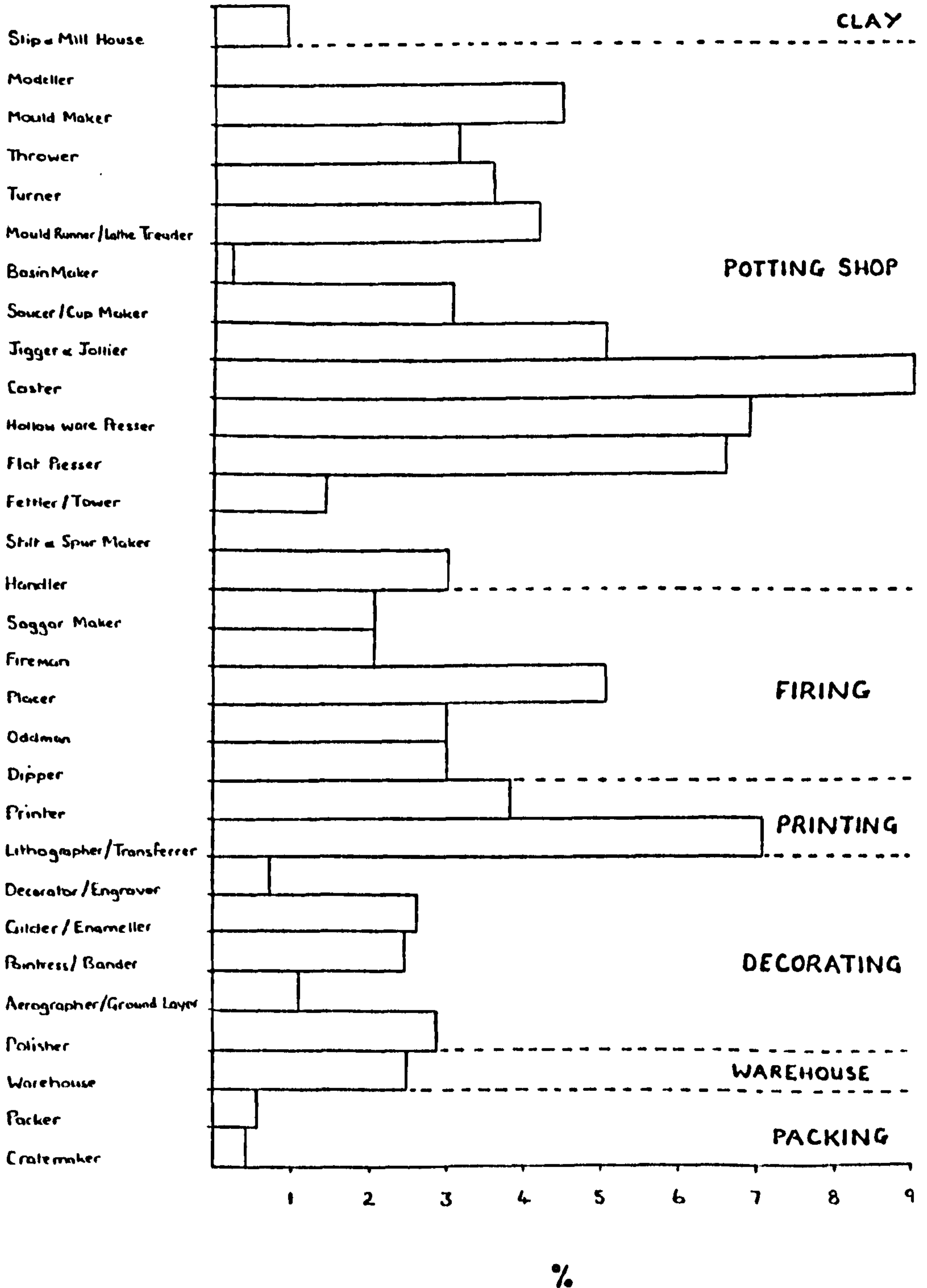
100. See footnote 88.

101. See Chapter 3.2.

Table 17

Level of Union Dispute Activity 1906-1924

Source: CATU COLL, Union Dispute Files 1906-1924 covering 288 recorded disputes.



together not only in Burslem but throughout the district'.<sup>102</sup>

The 'trade' or 'district' price for an article or pattern became benchmarks for occupational or craft bargaining. The strongest area bargaining units were the craft or skilled groups. On 28 July, 1910 Bishop & Stonier were routinely corresponding with the union central office that 'we herewith accept the offer made by you on the 19th inst., at the Handlers' prices sub committee'. It was often the craft area-based groups who responded to the problems of an isolated workgroup as happened in 1907 when the Cauldon sanitary dispute was generalised to cover the whole sanitary sub-industry.<sup>103</sup> As an analysis of unions dispute files shows (see Table 17) the craft and skilled occupations appear to have dominated the union's bargaining activity. This was perfectly consistent with the strength of the skilled workgroups on the potbank, allied with their area solidarity with their fellow skilled potters. Moreover, it was the craft groups at the potbank and area level which were responsible for the main episodes of bargaining during the period: episodes which historians have mistakenly taken for industry-wide bargaining. Therefore when manufacturers and union met in 1921 to discuss the general level of wages in the industry it was 'the consideration of departmental (or trade) notices', which was of

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102. L433, Hanley District C<sup>ee</sup> to central office, 16 Sept., 1915. L447 sanitary pressers, 1 Jan., 1920. L273 hollow ware pressers' district prices, 21 Nov. 1908. L116 J. Alcock of saggar makers committee 27 January, 1920. See also: L122, mould makers; L319, ovenmen; L82 flat pressers; L605 handlers; L147 printers and transferrers and L155, casters.

103. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1907, p.475.

paramount importance. After the 1920 general settlement it was noted how negotiations were 'an all year business, with departmental meetings called for saggar-makers, glost placers, odd men, dippers, biscuit bedders, hollow ware placers, kilnmen and handlers'. The national agreements of the later part of the period were essentially amalgamations of layer upon layer of departmental or trade group bargaining. Nor should it be assumed that sectional bargaining was divisive and negative. Many of the craft and trade groups' demands served as blueprints for smaller or less skilled groups. In 1911 the tactics of the turners in Longton became a model for other groups in china.<sup>104</sup>

Some manufacturers and groups of trade unionists tried to establish bargaining units based on the seven sub-industries. These were less permanent and far weaker than the occupational group level since employer and union involvement varied markedly with their relative strength within a sub-industry and according to trade conditions. In 1907 seven sub-industry manufacturers' committees existed yet in that year alone attitudes towards sub-industry bargaining diverged widely. The china manufacturers, as a result of foreign and domestic competition, were 'dropping down to prices never heard of before' due to 'want of cohesion among the manufacturers'.<sup>105</sup> In

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104. In loc.cit., 1 Dec., 1921, p.1828. CATU COLL, 1920 wage negotiations, p.4 and 1920 printed wage settlement, p.5. L82, terms of agreement of departmental demands, March 1919. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1911, p.1263. See Price, Masters, Unions and Men, pp. 46 & 500 for the positive role of leading groups.

105. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., p.212 and 1 March, p.475 and 1 May, 1907, p.597. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 2 December, 1918. S. Clowes scrapbook, 27 March, 1907.

contrast, the jet and rockingham and sanitary masters were well organised.<sup>106</sup> Yet attitudes to sub-industry bargaining varied between manufacturers. While the jet and rockingham masters readily negotiated, the sanitary owners refused. The sanitary masters 'were determined to fight the men at any cost' and had 'formed an employers' federation, on the lines of the engineering employers'. Alternatively, pottery workers found it equally difficult to establish and maintain sub-industry wide organisation. Sanitary organisation and bargaining was especially active in 1909-1912, when casting provided a central issue, but collapsed during the war when the market fell.<sup>107</sup> China developed a more stable bargaining unit covering Longton largely as a result of strong union pressure in the area from 1909 onwards.<sup>108</sup> Stoneware never bargained at this level and even in 1926 still lacked a standard wage scale.<sup>109</sup> The largest sub-industry, earthenware, produced a form of bargaining which was meant to apply to all its member companies during and after the First World War. The diversity of products and firms within earthenware always limited the applicability of any agreements which might be reached. The sub-industry level of bargaining was impermanent and varied greatly in its strength and coverage where it did exist. At best these forums dealt with certain occupational groups and never covered

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106. Labour Gazette, 1908, pottery industry report. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1907, p.478. CATU COLL, L240 terms of settlement of jet and rockingham dispute 25 March, 1913, L246 same for 18 Oct., 1917. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1914, p.331 & 1 Feb., 1922, p.279.

107. CATU COLL, L174 sanitary agreement 28 May, 1909, L715, L721, sanitary workers c<sup>ee</sup> to A. Llewellyn 28 March, 1912 and L106, sanitary agreement 25 March, 1918.

108. P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1917, p.896 & 1 Sept., 1911, p.1033. CATU COLL, L178, J. Lovatt to J. Arrowsmith, sec. of china manufacturers' assoc., 29 July, 1914. D10, wage notice to china manufacturers, 1 July 1914.

109. NEC., mins. 22 Sept., 1917, and L334 Minutes of Stoneware trade conference, 26 March, 1926.

all the workers in the sub-industry.<sup>110</sup> The factory and the sub-industry were both inappropriate locations for dealing with the problems raised by the multiplicity of trades they contained.

It has been assumed that industry-wide collective bargaining was established in British industry by 1900 and has since been the norm.<sup>111</sup> In the pottery industry bargaining on this scale did not exist before 1916 and even after that date the term must be used very carefully. The differing settling times used by sections of the industry made industry-wide bargaining impossible until the Great War. The dispute phases of 1900, 1906-1908 and 1911 never involved the entire industry, although the Labour Gazette and the language of some press reports suggests the opposite. The 1900 episode principally involved the printers and transferrers, as well as the pressers but only in the earthenware sub-industry. In 1911 the negotiations of that year involved 'sectional (occupational) committees'. As a potter observed 'as regarded the case of the clay workers other than flat pressers, it was pointed out by the manufacturers that the notices given by the men were by no means general'. Only by 1916 did a single union bargaining association (of the NAS and the ovenmen) exist.<sup>112</sup> In 1916 it was noted that:

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110. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1910, p.920 & 1 Sept., 1907, p.1198. CATU COLL, D15, British Pottery Manufacturers' Federation, Operatives Wages, March, 1919.

111. V. Allen, 'The origins of industrial conciliation and arbitration', International Review of Social History, 1904, Vol. IX, pp. 237-254. Burgess, Origins of British Industrial Relations, p.291. Rowe, Wages, pp. 65, 70, 74 and 84.

112. CATU COLL, L1 H. Clay to S. Clowes, 14 Feb., 1928. For variation in settling times see L203, Wileman's to NSPW 10 Feb., 1923, and L313, Conference of china manufacturers & operatives, 21 June, 1912. Labour Gazette, 1900, pottery industry report. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 13 April, 1911 and 4 Sept., 1920. See Chapter 3.2. P. Gazette, 1 March, p.347 & 1 April, 1908, p.469; 1 May, 1911, p.572.



this year, however, we believe a precedent was fixed by the workers, inasmuch as instead of apprising the manufacturers of their demands individually, or in individual groups or classes, as has long been the custom, a general formal notice was served upon the secretary of the Manufacturers Association<sup>113</sup> by the secretary of the Pottery Workers' Union.

Yet even the epoch-making qualities of this event cannot sustain the argument that industry-wide bargaining was permanently established. Manufacturer and union action remained highly sectional. Annual negotiations between the organisations of employers and employed only signified the beginning of a widespread, fragmented process. The tensions between individual, workshop and wider collective forms of bargaining continued. The workgroup and area-based occupational group remained strong and active after the erection of industrial bargaining forums. Both management and workers were anxious to retain the local forms as the potters' union recognised. In 1920 the NSPW informed the manufacturers federation that 'the above increases shall apply to slip and mill-house hands and kiln firemen, but the Union recognises the right of Employees to pay these workers at the rate per hour arranged between the individual employer and employee'.<sup>114</sup> Similarly the 'Handbook of Agreements for the China Trade' (n.d.) used in the 1920s states that for decorators, although an industry-wide pricing committee will be established 'no prices shall be fixed for any decoration without consultation by the management with these decorators who are wholly or

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113. Op.cit., 1 April, 1916, p.425.

114. Times I.F.T. Supplement, May, 1918. 1924 Wage Inquiry. CATU COLL, L552a, March 1920 agreement. Cf. Batstone, Social Organisation of Strikes, pp. 51 & 61.

partly to do the work'. It was the customary base and strength of the lower levels of bargaining which ensured they remained in operation in the late 1920s when the attempted industrial forms broke down.<sup>115</sup>

Labour historians have placed great significance on the apparent shift from the informal to the wider formal modes of bargaining in British industry during this period. Price asserts that the 'transition from an unformalised to a formalised system of industrial relations was the critical event in modern labour history whose significance can hardly be underestimated'. Rowe considered the change as predetermined. As he put it: 'the establishment of collective bargaining on a national basis must be viewed as a more or less inevitable process of evolution'.<sup>116</sup> In the pottery industry the dynamic of industrial relations was rather different.

Superficially there is evidence to suggest that industrial relations did become increasingly formalised during this period in the pottery industry. Arnold Wethered, in 1924, thought the National Council of the Pottery Industry, established in 1917, was 'quite the leading example of what a Whitley Council can be'.<sup>117</sup> Leading potter owners certainly wanted stable industrial relations, if possible, through public formal agreements. By binding the union to written procedures the

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115. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation report, 1928, p.2. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.1, when the 1920 departmental demands remained unsettled. NSPW, Handbook of Agreements (Hanley, n.d.) p.21. 1931 wage negotiations, passim. L490, letter of S. Dodd (chairman of BPMF) to A. Hollins, 21 March, 1931.

116. Price, Masters, Unions and Men, pp. 55 and 95. Rowe, Wages, pp.132, 143 and 176. Shadwell, Industrial Efficiency, p.340. G. Allen, 'British Industries and their Organisation', p.9. Clegg, Industrial Relations, p.3. V. Allen, 'The origins of industrial conciliation and arbitration', p.254. R. Bean, 'The Liverpool dock strike of 1890', International Review of Social History, Vol. XVI, 1971, Part 1, p.69. Pollard and Robertson, The British Shipbuilding Industry, p.157.

117. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.D.

strength of informal, customary action might be minimised and workers brought under greater managerial control. The owners' attempts to establish an arbitration and conciliation board for the industry were impelled by this basic desire to create rules which would limit independent worker action. In 1908, a manufacturer observed how 'trades unionism is now more than ever before a great fact to be reckoned with in industrial affairs' and 'it is widely recognised that it forms a great safeguard against rash or ill-considered action by the operatives. Trades Union leaders are usually conscientious, well informed men, who may be relied on to discharge any unpractical demands by the rank and file'.<sup>118</sup>

Admittedly, the potters' leaders, at certain times, favoured the creation of more formal industrial relations. They saw real benefits were obtainable for pottery workers: they did not enter formal negotiations blind to manufacturer strategies. The union officials' prime aim was to establish a degree of order in wages and conditions. They wished to make employers accountable and control manufacturers' freedom of manoeuvre. For the potters this was an immense achievement when set against the previous century's experience of chaotic prices, companies undercutting each other and the dense undergrowth of impermanent informal bargains. Given that in 1892, 1900 and in 1907 a number of manufacturers had tried to cripple and destroy the potters' unions, holding masters to public, formally recognised agreements was considered

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118. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., p.91 and 1 April, 1908, p.470; See also, CATU COLL, L313, L766-707 and L719-720. R. Price, 'Labour, the Labour Process and the Dynamic of Labour History', p.20. Goodrich, The Frontier of Control, pp. xxiv and 225.

a great triumph. In 1911, therefore, the union could pressurise Furnivals into changing their treatment of their pressers by using the company's and their association's agreement with the union. In a practical way, formal recognition of the union by manufacturers was used as a means of recruiting members to the NAS. To argue with hindsight that these actions left the unequal basis of the wage contract between capital and labour untouched and therefore such activity was of little worth is surely the height of condescension.<sup>119</sup>

While pottery manufacturers wanted more formalised industrial relations in order to increase their control over organised labour; and although pottery unionists saw strategic reasons for constructing formal procedures and agreements, this did not result in the emasculation of the union. The outcome of the changes in industrial relations in the pottery industry were more problematic: they did not have the effect on the potters' union of 'rendering them comparatively harmless'.<sup>120</sup> Firstly, manufacturers, including the largest, continued to act unofficially when they felt their interests threatened by formal agreements.<sup>121</sup> Secondly the institutional, formal procedures were not permanent or complete in their coverage. The richness of workshop custom and independent, informal bargaining were never easily brought under

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119. P. Gazette, 1 July & 1 Nov., 1890; 1 Aug., 1891 and 1 April, 1895. 1 March, 1907, p.475. NCPI Mins, 1920, p.314. CATU COLL, L617 J. Lovatt to A. Llewellyn, 16 Jan., 1911. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1911, p.812; 1 July, 1917, p.697 and 1 Nov., 1918, p.876. CATU COLL, finance c<sup>es</sup> mins, 7 Dec., 1917.

120. Cf: Burgess, Origins of British Industrial Relations, p.vii. Benwell Project, Making of a Ruling Class, pp. 39-41.

121. CATU COLL, L723, J. Lovatt to A. Llewellyn, 18 Nov., 1911, 'confusion has arisen over some Firms not having yet paid the advances given by Mr. Moon's (Arbitration) Award, and Messrs. Doultons, Johnson Bros, and Twyfords are seeking to evade that part which gives ½d advance for Liners'.

control by union or manufacturers. During<sup>the</sup> 1907 sanitary dispute the workers' resistance was actually based on the masters' attempt to break the six week notice custom. From November 1912 through to January 1913 at Twyfords, a leading member of their manufacturers' association, a running dispute was fought over two trade customs: the right to second firing and the ability of workers to check the counts. Thomas Twyford was quite clear that, as he put it, 'I will have my business conducted in my own way' and he refused to negotiate or be involved in the generally agreed conciliation committee of two masters and two union representatives. The struggle for control of production in the potbank continued to be fought over wages, prices and allowances in their local settings. Even during the war when formal, industry-wide bargaining was at its strongest independent action by workers and separate bargaining was common.<sup>122</sup>

The conciliation and arbitration board, the manufacturers' associations and the National Council of the Pottery Industry on closer examination confirm that the development of a formalised system of industrial relations was not only partial but highly unstable. The disparate motivations and actions of both workers and masters, at all levels, never allowed these three institutions to direct their constituents effectively. The arbitration and conciliation board, though nominally in existence since 1868, was periodically disbanded.<sup>123</sup>

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122. S. Clowes scrapbook, 26 March & 15 April, 1907. CATU COLL, Twyford's correspondence L736-740. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1916, p.534 and 1 June, p.651.

123. Op.cit., 1 Oct., 1908, p.1186. Webb Trade Union Collection, Vol. XLIV, pp. 175-179. Staffordshire Knot, 31 Oct., 1891. Workman's Times, 12 Dec., 1890 and 14 Aug., 1891. W. Owen in TUC Report 1893, p.84.

Between 1891 and 1908 no board operated since the unions were 'sick of the name of arbitration'. Owners might boast that it was 'the first and most successful of the Labour Arbitration Boards in the Country' yet it only officially sat between 1908-1911.<sup>124</sup> The unions did not submit to the rules constructed by manufacturers as the contest over the board's reconstitution in 1907-1908 showed. In addition during its life time, 'sectional strikes were of fairly frequent occurrence.'<sup>125</sup>

Secondly, it was hardly surprising that formal bargaining procedures were so fragile when the manufacturers' associations were so weak.<sup>126</sup> From 1890 to 1910 ad hoc groups of masters combined during disputes to confront workers yet they consistently failed to act collectively on any larger scale. As one of their leaders admitted in 1906, 'the pottery trade, from the time of Wedgwood to now, has invariably been in want of

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124. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1907, p.716. Royal Commission on Trade Disputes, Q.4999. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1908, p.91 and 1 April, 1911, p.453.

125. As in the 19th century the fundamental difference between manufacturers and the unions centred on the exclusion 'good from oven' and apprenticeship rules from the board's jurisdiction. For an example of the sectional disputes which conciliative procedures engendered see CATU COLL, D45 Taylor Tunnicliff and the dispute with their throwers and turners. P. Gazette, 1 Mar.1908, p.349. S. Advertizer, 22 Feb., 1908. See also Phelps-Brown, Growth of British Industrial Relations, p.186 for the voluntarist basis of most forms of conciliation and arbitration at this time. K. Ogasawara, 'Notes on Complications in Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation', mimeo, Warwick, March, 1981, for broken history of arbitration boards and a critique of J. Porter's static perspective in Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration 1860-1914, unpublished Ph.D thesis, Leeds, 1968.

126. Clapham, Economic History of England, Vol. III, p.214 for manufacturers' pricing or trading associations. Ashworth, An Economic History of England, pp. 99-100 for the growth of associations 1880-1900 in response to declining prices and the growth of unions, and pp. 387-388 for the unofficial pacts between employers. Charles, Development of Industrial Relations in Britain, pp. 39-41 for the early 20th century growth of employer organisations specifically to fight trade unions. Turner, Union, Structure, Growth and Policy, p.373 for the detailed 'divisions of interest' between cotton firms and the role of unions in forcing them to act jointly. Clegg, in Flanders & Clegg, System of Industrial Relations, p.197 for the definition of price and bargaining associations. Kirkaldy, British Labour, p.xviii, for the low numbers of associations.

union. There are the different sections ... and each has fought its own hand'. The sub-industries experienced widely differing trade conditions, technology and labour relations.<sup>127</sup> Government intervention, the war and the growth of the union's strength led to a period of stronger collaboration between manufacturers. Legislation regarding workers' compensation and industrial illness potentially affected all companies and resulted in temporary collective action by the more established firms to resist the outcomes of the Lord James inquiry of 1900-1902, the Workman's Compensation Bill in 1906 and the lead investigations of 1908-1910.<sup>128</sup> By 1914, as masters conceded, these episodes combined with 'labour troubles' and 'the Insurance Bill' had 'impressed upon manufacturers, as perhaps nothing else could have done, the urgent necessity for combination'.<sup>129</sup> The immediate problems of raw material and labour supply during the war produced a 'special war committee of manufacturers associations' in 1914 which became the British Pottery manufacturers' Association in 1918.<sup>130</sup> But the composition and actions of the new organisations reveal their ineffectiveness. The association's membership list shows that over half the employers were not included. The smaller masters were notably absent. The rules were so

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127. Staffordshire Knot, 27 June, 1891. Truck Acts Report, 1906, Q.679. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1890; 1 June, 1892; 1 Sept. & 1 Nov., 1898. Lawton Hall Conference Report, 1907, pt. iv. Royal Commission on Trade Disputes, p.281, Q.4990-4991. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1906, p.188 & 1 Feb., 1919, p.168.

128. PRO. HO/45/1018/B11239P, letters of 'Joint C<sup>ee</sup> of Allied Manufacturers' to Home Office, 10 Sept., 1900. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1906, p.823; 1 October, 1910, p.1125 and 1 Nov., 1911, p.1263.

129. Op.cit., 1 Sept., 1914, p.1081.

130. Op.cit., 1 Aug., 1920, p.1052. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 2 July, 1917 and 1 Dec., 1918. CATU COLL, L593 notes on joint c<sup>ee</sup> of manufacturers, 7 September, 1915.

loose that when trading was disrupted and prices fell in the 1920s enforcement of their regulations was a problem and therefore the cohesiveness of industrial bargaining broke down.<sup>131</sup>

The intentions of the National Council, formed in 1917, were ambitious. The new body was to bring about uniform organisation and pricing in the industry, roll back foreign competition and even help create a new transport system: these were the understandable aspirations born of the reconstruction era.<sup>132</sup> The council's standing orders, however, underline the limitations of its scope. A two-thirds majority for motions to be carried existed; the statistical, research, organisation and wages committees were designed as information gatherers and discussion devices. The council could not compel manufacturers or workers to accept its decisions nor had it the powers to enforce agreements. The council was an entirely voluntary body.<sup>133</sup> The attempt to encompass so complex an industry failed. In 1920 on the basic question of wages and profits it was found that 'no summary of information could be obtained which would be of any practical use'. The 1920 and

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131. The Committee of Inquiry into the Workmans Compensation Act, 1920, Q.18669 shows that under half the firms were in the BPMF in 1920. 1924 Wage Inquiry, pp. Q & F2 also indicate only 187 firms. NCPI, mins, 1 July, 1921 show 235. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1921, p.794. The Rules and Regulations of the British Earthenware Manufacturers Association, 30 Oct., 1916, pp. 3-9 contain little effective sanctions against members. Eyre Stringer, New Hall Porcelain, p.65.

132. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., p.60 & 1 Feb., 1918, p.139. The National Council of the Pottery Industry, Reprinted from the Staffordshire Sentinel (n.d. Jan. 1918?). Report of a Conference of Operatives and Manufacturers on the Pottery Industry, 5 May, 1917 (Darlington n.d.) for the advisory roles of Henry Clay, Arnold Rowntree and E.H. Wethered. For the climate of reconstruction: Charles, Development of Industrial Relations, p.86. A.L. Bowley, Some Economic Consequences of the Great War (1930) p. 21ff.

133. For the standing orders and functions of the council and its committees see, Minutes, 11 April and 11 January, 1918. CATU COLL, L209 & 210, Frederick Hand (secretary to the council) to A. Hollins, 19 Sept., 1919.



1924 disputes did involve a committee from the Council, yet in 1920 a government investigator found that with regard to the works committees scheme, 'the vast majority of operatives know little or nothing of the recommendations of the joint industrial council'.<sup>134</sup> In the 1920s union members questioned the council's relevance. The annual delegation of 1922 was asked if the union's payments to the council were justified by the results. In 1923 one delegate put it to the union that the council 'looked like doing little or nothing in the actual interests of the workers'.<sup>135</sup> Many manufacturers did not want the council to deal with industrial relations; they preferred the body to operate as a means of lobbying government. The fall in attendance by manufacturers from 1921 further undermined the council's efficiency.<sup>136</sup> The National Council failed to alter fundamentally the industrial relations of pottery manufacture. At the very most it gave temporary reinforcement to the formal industry-wide bargaining between 1917 and 1924. As one of the architects, Henry Clay, confessed: 'the previously existing machinery for dealing with wage questions was left to function undisturbed' while the executive strength to carry out the ambitious objectives was missing.<sup>137</sup>

#### 4.4 The Industrial Relations of Pottery Manufacture II:

##### Conflict.

Professor Williams asserted that there had been a 'remarkable record of industrial peace in the pottery industry' in this century. He cited

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134. NCPI, Mins, 17 Oct. 1918, p.71 & Organisation C<sup>ee</sup>, 17 Mar., 1920.

135. CATU COLL, A. Delegation, p.111 and 136.

136. NCPI, Mins. 2 May, 1922, executive c<sup>ee</sup> & 2 Jan., 1925.

137. H. Clay, The Problem of Industrial Relations (1929) pp.162, 165 & 167. See also, Cole, Workshop Organisation, p.122 and Charles, Development of Industrial Relations, p.196ff, for a similar view.

the uniformity of bargaining forms as a major reason for the lack of conflict (!). Yeaman made the claim that 'there has been no strike or dispute since 1899'. Both conclusions are particularly curious. The industry's 19th century experience shows that the potters participated in many major industrial battles and that the contest for the control of production was a continuing theme involving a wide range of issues. The centrality of conflict to industrial life in general makes the claims of Williams and Yeaman especially unusual. Neither author explains what they mean by conflict.<sup>138</sup>

At its narrowest industrial conflict is equated with the strike. The strike has been defined as 'a temporary stoppage of work by a group of employees in order to express a grievance or enforce a demand'.<sup>139</sup> Conflict arises from many contexts and may be expressed in differing forms. Scullion and Edwards distinguish between the behavioural, institutional and structural variants. The behavioural form is where conflict is actively recognised and expressed by participants; the institutional arises where conflict is expressed by customary procedures and practices; structural conflict exists when the forces making for conflict are implicit within a given situation, though they may remain unexpressed.<sup>140</sup> Recent studies of conflict highlight the variety of

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138. B. Williams (sometime professor of economics at University College of North Staffordshire), Structure of British Industry, pp. 298 and 300. Yeaman, 'Pottery Industry of North Staffordshire,' p.150. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, pp. 50-54 and 80-99. Whipp, 'Women Workers of Staffordshire', pp. 86 & 101-105.

139. J. Griffin, Strikes. A Study in Quantitative Economics (1939), pp.20-22, as cited in Hyman, Strikes, p.17.

140. P.K. Edwards and H. Scullion, The Social Organisation of Industrial Conflict and Resistance in the Workplace (Oxford, 1982) p.12ff.

its expression and point to the strike as a relatively exceptional form. The typical strike has been found to be the spontaneous, small scale and short stoppage. Even though this form is so common in industry it has gone largely unnoticed by official statistics and by commentators on the pottery industry especially.<sup>141</sup>

The pottery industry of the early 20th century exhibited conflict in all its forms. The depth of individual or workgroup bargaining was indicative of the conflict generated in the workshops of the potbank. The 'day-books' of union activists record the high incidence of small-scale, short-term disputes involving between one or half a dozen workers and lasting no more than a day. The majority of these tiny events never required union recognition nor action. It was the density of this routine form of conflict that led the union in 1911 to require that members reported the outcome of their disputes to the lodges in order that the union might record their incidence.<sup>142</sup> In 1909 a local observer reflected how 'for three or four years now, the sanitary trade has been upset by dispute after dispute, and much of it might have been avoided had more reliance been placed in the leaders (of the union)'.<sup>143</sup> The large-scale co-ordinated strike was in fact the exception. Put beside Stearn's strike model much of the potters' strike activity was, to use his terms, unsophisticated.<sup>144</sup> There was a wide gulf between the forms

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141. Batstone, Social Organisation of Strikes, p.51. Cronin, Industrial Conflict, p.12. Cole, Organised Labour, pp.124-125. D. Brody, Steelworkers in America: the non-union era (Cambridge, Mass. 1960). The Labour Gazette, records only official disputes for this period relying solely on local correspondents.

142. CATU COLL, A. Lawton day-book passim & example of 7s 6d payment to group of women towers on strike. NEC, Mins, 1 Feb, 1916. Grindley's transferrers & 27 Feb, 1917, 1 girl dispute at Woods. Sam Clowes scrapbook, 4 April, 1907. Annual Delegation, 1911, p.9. Financial Ledgers Vol. I to III small grants to individuals and groups on strike.

143. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1909, p.1169.

144. P. Stearns, 'Measuring the evolution of strike movements', International Review of Social History, Vol. XIX, 1974, Pt. 1, pp. 4-27, using the criteria of size, workers involved, frequency, planning, timing, duration and goals.

of potters' strike action. At one extreme was the spontaneous, unofficial sometimes violent strike action. In 1907, during a dispute at Doulton's, sanitary workers fought a group of blacklegs, forcing them to shelter in Hanley police station.<sup>145</sup> At the other extreme was the calculated, planned offensive over a major issue. As in 1881, 1890, 1906-8 and 1920, for example, these strikes were played out with deliberate union ritual and theatre. They involved the entire apparatus of bands, daily marches, mass meetings in the main squares of the Six Towns, backed up by the organisation of temporary stewards, collectors and the trade committees.<sup>146</sup>

During this period in the pottery industry, some of the most notable episodes of conflict occurred. It was said of the 1908 disputes that 'never in the history of the trade probably, has a more serious crisis arisen'.<sup>147</sup> Although the surviving union records are incomplete the main phases of dispute activity seems to have occurred in 1910-1915 and 1919-1920; 1908-1909, 1916-1917 and 1923-1924 were years of active but less intense conflict.<sup>148</sup> The early 1900s and 1920s were relatively quiet. The disputes which involved large sections or all the workers in a sub-industry occurred in 1900 when a dispute involving printers, transferrers and ovenmen in earthenware arose over a wage increase claim. The conflict of 1906-1908 in the sanitary sub-industry was really a series of rolling strikes concerning the introduction of casting. 1906-1907

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145. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1907, p.598 & 1 Sept., 1910, p.1039. Cf. R. Price, 'The other face of respectability: violence in the Manchester Brickmaking trade, 1859-1870', Past and Present, 1975, Feb., No. 66, pp. 110-132.

146. MRC. MS28/CO/1/B/24/4 Handbill, 6 Dec., 1881. Workman's Times, 14 Nov., 1890. S. Clowes scrapbook, 30 Mar., 4, 16 & 17 April, 1907. P. Gazette, 1 Dec., 1920, p.1828.

147. Op.cit., 1 April, 1908, p.471 and 1 April, 1911, p.399.

148. Report of the Chief Correspondent on the Strikes and Lock-outs of 1900, Cd. 689, pp. 68-69 & xlviii.

was sparked off by a workers' offensive as prices rose: in 1908 masters counter-attacked with wage cuts as prices fell.<sup>149</sup> The disputes of 1911 were over wage levels in earthenware, sanitary and tile sections and the rules surrounding the arbitration board.<sup>150</sup> The strikes of 1913 involved jet and rockingham, tiles and the cane and white makers while 1914 witnessed disputes over wage structures in earthenware and china.<sup>151</sup> The 1919-1920 disputes were over the reduction of wages by manufacturers. During 1923-1924 workers attempted to recoup the wage losses which had followed the extensive price cutting of the early 1920s.<sup>152</sup>

A number of explanations exist for the pattern of industrial conflict nationally during this period. The industrial peace of the early 1900s was related to the depression in industry, unemployment and the willingness of employers and unions to continue operating collective bargaining machinery. 1908-1913 is generally agreed to have been a period of intense friction.<sup>153</sup> Burgess highlights the conflict which arose over the exercise of managerial prerogatives as employers changed working arrangements in response to changing market conditions.<sup>154</sup> Hunt emphasises the role of the trade cycle and labour market. In 1908, he argues, the strikes were in a period of high unemployment and restricted

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149. S. Clowes scrapbook, 17 April, 1906 & 17 April, 1907. S. Advertiser 22 Feb., p.5.

150. P. Gazette, 1 April, p.453 & 1 May, 1911, p.572. The Times, April 13, p.12; April 28, p.6 & Aug. 10, p.8, 1911.

151. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1913, p.452 & 1 Mar., p.331 & 1 May, 1914, p.602.

152. Op.cit., 1 April, p.393 & 1 Oct., 1919, p.1109. The Times, 16 Aug., p.7, & 26 Aug., p.12, 1919; 4 Sept., 1920, p.9. CATU COLL, NEC mins, 30 May, 1920.

153. Wage Negotiations 1924. Report of the NCPI (Hanley 1924).

154. Burgess, Challenge of Labour, pp. 82-84. A. Levine, Industrial Retardation in Britain, 1880-1914 (1967), p.105.

to well organised workers. By 1910 the economic conditions had changed, the demand for labour was high enough for the less well organised to act. The intensity of disputes activity is explained by the experience of stagnant or falling real wages coming on top of eight years of high unemployment.<sup>155</sup> During the war strikes were less frequent. Conflict did occur in South Wales and on the Clyde for example, but these were largely due to a combination of factors not easily reproduced elsewhere.<sup>156</sup> After the 1919-1920 boom, the collapse of world prices combined with the government's policy of rapid deflation led to lower prices and widespread attempts by employers to reduce wages. The effects of depression and unemployment made for defensive strike action and led to the defeat of a number of key industrial groups, including the railway workers, miners, dockers and building trades.<sup>157</sup>

Though the pottery dispute record broadly resembles the national sequence the explanation of the potters' experience also involves features unique to their industry. The general accounts of the period minimise the composite causation of conflict.<sup>158</sup> The disputes of 1908 in pottery involved at least five main separate issues: the 15% price increase, a revision of counts, a change of ware sizes, the abolition of good-from-oven and the limitation of apprentices. These questions were in turn entangled in the recreation of the arbitration board and the conditions which masters and workers laid down for its operation.

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155. Hunt, British Labour History, pp. 321-322. Cf. Burgess, *op.cit.*, p.114.

156. Cole, Organised Labour, pp. 70, 121 & 182. J. Hinton, The First Shop Stewards Movement. R. Holton, British Syndicalism (1976).

157. Cole, History of the British Working Class Movement, pp. 182ff & 192.

158. Batstone, Social Organisation of Strikes, p.50. Hyman, Strikes, pp. 63 & 120.

The 1911 general earthenware dispute was also composite in character, although made up of a different set of elements.<sup>159</sup> Secondly, disputes are too easily taken to be isolated, one-off events, whereas they may be related to a prior sequence of events. The 1908-1911 events apparently stand out as the first major strikes for a decade. However, the action of the workers is only intelligible in the light of the wage reductions and defeats of the 1890s and the fact that the potters perceived they had not benefitted from the series of technological changes. Conflict had been implicit within the relations of master and worker over the organisation of production. To Noah Parkes the trade union organiser in 1908, 'the great improvements in the pottery industry in the last twenty years had gone vastly in favour of the masters' and now the potters wished to take their share.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, memory was an important feature. Workers did not forget the past actions of employers. As one observed in 1908, 'eight or nine years ago a section of the employers unwisely adopted the attitude that the workmen's unions were a negligible quantity, and could be ignored. The spirit begot a feeling of bitterness and antagonism on the part of the men which has led to many of our difficulties'.<sup>161</sup>

The broad explanation for the main dispute activity of the period rests on three main causes: wages, the cost of living and the organisation of work. A review of conflict in the industry at every level

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159. P. Gazette, 1 Mar., 1908, p.347 & 1 Sept., 1911, p.1016.

160. S. Advertizer, 22 Feb., 1908, p.5. CATU COLL, L736-740, Twyford's disputes.

161. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1908, p.90.

shows wage or piece price changes to be the dominant concern of both sides. In a market economy wages were central to the potter in terms of purchasing power and status. Wage rate disputes were often the focus of conflict since they embodied changes in working conditions or relations in the potbank. Casting was disputed throughout the period in wage terms in public whereas the underlying issues involved skill and status differentials and the ability to control the introduction of new technology. Disputes over wages were not always about absolutes but relatives. The point at issue was the structure of wages. The potters consistently cited their pay levels (1924 was the most detailed example) in relation to workers in other industries during disputes.<sup>162</sup>

Wages remained at the forefront of the potters' demands while the philosophy behind the union arguments changed. In the late 19th century the union had argued that workers should profit from buoyant demand just as they had suffered from periods of depressed trade. By the 1900s, in common with other unions the union not only thought their wages should reflect 'commercial prosperity but that a social criterion should govern wages'. In other words, with skilled and unskilled workers threatened by the trade cycle and technological change, minimum levels were demanded. Once established, these levels became a clear point of dispute. The 1924 dispute rested largely on Clowes' assertion that 'we want to put in a minimum rate below which no one shall go'. Minimum wage levels, and the cost of living became strong reasons for the

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162. The Board of Trade and Ministry of Labour reports in the Labour Gazette, 1900-1924 show that the vast majority of the officially recorded disputes concerned piece prices/wages. A sample from the union's dispute files confirmed that out of 146 clearly documented small scale cases, 52 concerned piece prices; 41 wages; 5 hours; 28 organisation and conditions of work; 11 apprenticeship and 19 dismissal. P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1911, p.1016. 'less well paid for skill than any other trade' as J. Lovatt put it. 1924 Wage Inquiry, 'Schedule of Comparative Wages' using the trade board Act figures. Cf. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1908, p.1186 Lovatt's statements with Clapham, op.cit., p.474 that before 1914 'there was no general familiarity with cost of living figures' in bargaining.



disputes of 1908-1914 Lovatt and Hollins built a large part of their cases in 1908 and 1911 on the calculation of a 15% increase in the cost of living during the previous decade. In 1919-1920 and 1923-1924 minimum wage levels, especially for low paid potters were one of the main planks in the union's arguments.<sup>163</sup>

The organisation of work was a powerful influence on conflict. How new machinery was introduced and the changes in working practices were high priorities, especially for the skilled groups. It was the pivotal workers, the hollow-ware and sanitary pressers, the printers and ovenmen who were directly threatened. They were also the best organised groups within the industry and union. The diffusion of improved jiggers and jollies, the introduction of casting or printing machines and the intensification of oven work occurred gradually throughout the period. Therefore almost every major dispute includes references to these principal changes. The fear and anger of hollow-ware pressers towards the new technology was based not so much on the adverse effect on working conditions but the threat of unemployment. In the first phase of casting innovation, some of the highest paid workers in the industry faced the sack. At one potbank in 1908 it was discovered that two casters could do the work of five pressers: the firm were able to 'dispense with' 19 men. During the 1924 dispute the bitterness of Booth and Clowes towards the manufacturers who decimated their calling was apparent. Clowes could barely control his anger over the effect of

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163. Cf. W. Owen to Hatherton Arbitration 1879, Potteries Examiner, 22 Nov., 1879 with, S. Advertizer, 22 Feb., 1908, p.5, & P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1919, p.1109. See also, Briggs in Flanders and Clegg, System of Industrial Relations, pp. 12-13. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.131.

casting when he met the masters that year. As he told the chairman of the manufacturers' association: 'I do not smile at it, because there are 110 hollow-ware pressers unemployed - men who have been to the war. It is nothing to smile at, Mr. Bullock'.<sup>164</sup>

The timing of industrial conflict was affected by the trade cycle, employer strategy and to a lesser extent political activism. In broad terms conflict in the pottery trade was related to industrial performance. The major dispute phases of 1900, 1906-1907, 1911, 1913, 1919-1920 and 1923-1924 occurred in periods of increasing output, exports and employment.<sup>165</sup> The trade cycle clearly influenced the thinking of trade unionists. Sam Clowes argued that the 5% price rises of 1907 had put £300,000 in the masters' pockets and the workers now wanted their share. Workers and union officials especially kept a close eye on the trade returns.<sup>166</sup> This explains why the disputes of 1923-1924 occurred in what appears to be a generally depressed decade. The export and output figures began to rise slightly in 1923 and therefore Clowes, Hollins and Tunnicliffe built their claims for wage minima and rises around the discernible trade improvement.<sup>167</sup> Dispute activity between sub-industries was also governed by economic performance. In 1907 the china sector was peaceful compared to others and it was observed that the 'depression and despondency is remarkable in the towns of Longton and Fenton'. By contrast the sanitary section was expanding output and experiencing high levels of strike activity.<sup>168</sup> Union growth was allied to the trade

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164. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1907, p.716. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.67.

165. See monthly reports of the Labour Gazette in pottery and Table 4, Chapter 1.

166. S. Clowes, P. Gazette, 1 March, 1908, p.348.

167. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p. K1. See also, Cronin, Industrial Conflict, pp. 58, 97 & 101.

168. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1907, p.711.

cycle. Union membership levels were closely related to strike action (although strikes themselves can affect union growth). 1891-1893, 1900, 1906-1907, 1911, 1913-1914 and 1919-1920 were all peak years for output, exports and union membership. The disputes of 1923-24 were the only years between 1920 and 1929 that union membership rose.<sup>169</sup>

The perceptions and actions of employers were related to the trade cycle as much as trade unionists but with different outcomes. Employers were prepared to endure strikes and stoppages during depressed trading since the loss of profit was relatively small. In 1907 it was argued that the sanitary manufacturers would have been more likely to entertain price and wage rises early in the year. When demand dropped from mid year, the masters were prepared to sit out a two and a half month strike.<sup>170</sup> During 1920-1921 employers attempted a 20% wage reduction on two grounds. The reassertion of foreign competition and the general drop in demand made a public case possible for their action. Coincidentally, the union was financially weak with funds savagely reduced by the unemployment pay expended as a result of the coal strike.<sup>171</sup>

Some authors have argued generally that the period of conflict 1908-1914 and 1918-1921 owed much to the political debates of those years.<sup>172</sup> Without doubt industrial conflict in the pottery industry during this period was primarily the result of issues generated from within the potbank allied with worker and employer strategy. The social

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169. See Table 4, Table 13 and Labour Gazette in loc.cit.

170. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1907, p.716 and 1 March, 1908, p.348. Hobsbawm, Labour's Turning Point, p.155. Cronin, op.cit., p.129.

171. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1921, p.1392.

172. Burgess, Challenge of Labour, p.168. Cronin, op.cit., p.112.

and political arguments had an indirect influence only: they formed a backdrop to some of the main disputes. The unemployment campaign ideas of the SDF were echoed in the platform rhetoric of Booth in the 1900s.<sup>173</sup> Union officials were prominent in the growth of the local labour party and the years 1918-1920 were noted for 'the present solidarity of labour in the district' with the highest number ever of council seats won by the labour party. The war period was less traumatic for the potters than some of the engineering and mining districts since government contracts were few and the intervention of the Munitions Act was felt far less. Clearly, the developing socialism of Clowes, Hollins and Lovatt influenced their long term goals, as their speeches indicate: but it was the short term tactical considerations of the potters arising from the changing organisation of work which were the immediate causes of industrial conflict.<sup>174</sup>

### Conclusion

Although the pottery industry was composed of almost 500 different firms, they exhibited a number of common features which help explain their form of managerial control. Control was often personal and direct. Yet given the labour intensive aspects of pottery manufacture, its high labour costs and competitive markets, control of labour was essential and became increasingly vital as markets changed and production had to be intensified. Management control of work was not established overnight. Control was constantly being attempted by management and in

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173. J. Booth, S. Sentinel, 28 March, 1907.

174. S. Clowes, S. Advertizer, 1 Feb., 1908, p.7. (See Chapter 5.2 below). P. Gazette, 1 April, 1917, p.407 and 1 Dec., 1919, p.1355.

turn challenged by workers on a daily basis. Payment for labour, the introduction of technology or changes in working practices, the structuring of the workforce and the responsibility for industrial disease all became areas of contested control. The relationship between masters and union was never one of acceptance or rejection. Management would usually deal personally with union leaders on general questions but would seldom allow them direct access to production. Bargaining between worker and owner was therefore highly informal and unregulated. Management used a number of devices to create an ideology of common interest and attachment to the firm among its workers. The grievances produced by the experience of work on the potbank meant that whilst those devices may have softened the attitudes of potters there was no blind acceptance of paternalist values, as the strikes at some of the most famous exponents of paternalism show.

The combination of the fragmented production process, the sectional workforce and the rather disparate potters' union with this profile of management provides an explanation of both the structure and the experience of industrial relations in the pottery industry. Bargaining operated on a number of levels. As befitted the social relations and division of labour in the potbank, the level where most workers bargained was in the informal workgroups or the local occupational groups. In contrast to general assumptions, the formal industry-wide, national bargaining forms were far less important, although clear attempts to erect such forms were made. Moreover, an analysis which recognises the distinction between the formal and the informal; the national unit and the workshop, reveals that management had an important impact on not only industrial relations but on the character of the union. In its distaste for industrial bargaining and regulation, and by bargaining largely

within the potbank or the immediate area, management underwrote the value of workshop or shopfloor organisation of work as well as reinforcing the authority of occupational groups amongst the potters. That bargaining was predominantly informal, on a small scale and between individual management and separate groups of workers both reflected and more especially, intensified the sectionalism of the workforce, the union and the industry. The efforts of the union to centralise its organisation, control its membership and to try to shift bargaining from the informal to the formal arena must be set against the reality of informality and sectionalism. Finally, since bargaining occurred on so many levels and as the contest for control of production was continuous, the widespread pattern of conflict across the industry is understandable. The detailed sequence of conflict is explained by the conjunction of the range of issues and problems of the period with the perceptions of the potters who faced them.

## Chapter 5

### Community, Movement and State

#### 5.1 The Potters and the Community

No study of the potters in relation to their community, the labour movement or the state exists. The subject constitutes a substantial research topic in itself; space is available here for the first stages of such an inquiry. What follows is not a full scale cultural or political history of the Potteries: instead we will attempt to map out some of the basic features of the potters' community, their relevance to class and the growth of the area's labour movement in the 1900's. The relevance of community to labour history is readily apparent. Hobsbawm directed historians to look at the internal divisions of groups and classes as well as their relationship to other groups. As he put it 'class defines not a group of people in isolation, but a system of relationships, both vertical and horizontal'.<sup>1</sup> Gray noted the danger of writing the history of the working class in isolation, with assumptions about the structures, ideologies and strategies of other classes.<sup>2</sup> Other historians have opened up new lines of explanation for the development of trade unions and the labour movement by examining the communities workers inhabited and created besides studying the interaction of local occupational groups and their relationship with

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1. E. Hobsbawm, 'From social history to the history of society', in M.W. Flinn and T.C. Smout (eds.), Essays in Social History (1974) p.15.

2. R. Gray review of K. Brown (ed.), 'Essays in Anti-Labour History: responses to the rise of Labour in Britain (1974)' Social History, Oct. 1976, No. 3, p.395.

other bodies or political parties. These analyses have tried to penetrate 'the life beyond work'.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of community requires careful specification before it can be used in an historical setting. Jackson emphasises the shared experience of those who make up a community based on a common economic position: the experience is reinforced by kin relations and joint attachments to work.<sup>4</sup> Though these features may be found within a community they are, by themselves, insufficient to capture its full dimensions. Others have stressed the role played by forms of association.<sup>5</sup> A community is then a geographical area, in which mutually dependent groups act together to satisfy their needs through common sets of organisations. Calhoun offers a sharper conception by including both individuals and groups and basing it on social relationships. Community suggests, he argues, not only face to face contact, familiarity and commonality of purpose but a pattern of self-regulation. Moral obligation becomes the essence of community. A person is not necessarily conscious of the abstract object 'the community'. Yet he or she is absorbed via numerous relationships into the community and is aware of helping to determine the experience of others and of being affected by

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3. H. Gutman, Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America. A. Dawley, Class and Community. The Industrial Revolution in Lynn (Cambridge, Mass. 1976). B. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict. Skilled Workers and Industrial Capitalism in Hamilton, Ontario, 1860-1914. P. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics, p.98, found that 'figures of authority in the factory were massively present in the landscape of the life beyond work'. L. Williams, 'The coalowners' in D. Smith (ed.), A People and a Proletariat, p.94. J. MacFarlane, 'Counter-offensive for a South Yorkshire mining community' in Harrison (ed.), The Independent Collier, p.195.

4. B. Jackson, Working Class Community, p.164.

5. R. Frankenberg, Communities in Britain (1966) p.201.



other people. Community as a pattern of social organisation and as a defined way of life depends on a high degree of stability. Rules or standards define appropriate action within the community. Calhoun also asserts, as does Foster,<sup>6</sup> that the growth of working class collective action depended on the social integration of working class communities. Divisions within the ranks of workers and the differences in work patterns and local traditions could inhibit that growth.

As an analytical device the community, seen as a set of social relations, can illuminate a study of the potters' experience and their way of life. This concept of community leads to a questioning of the ties and contacts among the potters outside the workplace, and to ask how strong was the sense of common purpose; what kinds of traditional moral obligations existed and how far did the potters' collective action depend on the integration of the community. The forces making for divisions within the community and the impact of other groups and classes on the potters require investigation. We need to know what factors mediated between the potters' experience of work and their expression of union, class and political consciousness.

The close physical relationship of industries and their surrounding communities was a common feature of Britain's industrial and urban development. In the Potteries the link was especially strong as the region's name suggests. The Six Towns were physically dominated by the staple industry. A visitor in 1892 thought the towns were 'to all

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6. C. Calhoun, 'Community: toward a variable conceptualization for comparative research', Social History, Jan., 1980, Vol. 5, No. 1, p.105ff. For a more sceptical view of the concept of community and the use of anthropological networks see A. MacFarlane, 'History, anthropology and the study of Communities', Social History, May 1977, No. 5, pp. 631-652. J. Foster, 'Nineteenth-century towns: a class dimension' in Flinn and Smout, op.cit., p.190.

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intents and purposes one place', given the industry which united them. The inter-penetration of home and work within the lives of the potters has been demonstrated already, along with the overlap of trade unionism and the domestic sphere. Outsiders have noted how being a potter became 'a whole way of life'. However, it has also been shown how the stratification of the workforce by skill, authority and income at work were reproduced outside the factory.<sup>7</sup> A closer look at the Potteries reveals that the potters were highly localised in their social relations outside the potbank. This localism in many ways echoed the small scale of the potters' workplace and union groupings.

Attachment to the town or neighbourhood where a potter lived and usually worked, was strong. The lack of easily transferable skills between some sub-industries and the marked longevity of employment with a single firm made changing residence between the towns unlikely. Local districts had developed physically and socially during the 19th century whereby, as Harold Owen noted, 'the names of Longton, Fenton, Stoke, Hanley, Burslem and Tunstall had an individual and sufficient significance'. Potters today still regard fellow potters from different towns as 'foreigners'. Elsie Grocott worked in Stoke yet lived in Newcastle and like other workers earned her nickname 'Castle Black' from where her home was.<sup>8</sup> People locally were introduced as 'Miss Bennett, of Burslem'

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7. Board of Trade Report 1946, p.12. The Times, 1 Aug., 1918, p.10. Manners, Regional Development, p.236. Owen, The Staffordshire Potter p.1. G. Moore, A Mummer's Wife (1887), p.56. Daily Chronicle, 14 Nov., 1892, p.7. HMI Factories Report, 1919, p.219. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1922, p.780. F. Thistlethwaite, 'Atlantic migration of the pottery industry', p.274. See also, Meacham, A Life Apart, p.120ff. Pollard and Robertson, British Shipbuilding Industry, p.36. Matsumura, The Flint Glass Makers, passim.

8. Interview with E. Crocott and J.M.H. Owen, Op.cit., pp. 1-2. The Art Union, November, 1876, p.289. S. Advertizer, 10 Feb., 1906, p.7. A. Moyes, 'The potteries' in P. Wood, Industrial Britain. The West Midlands (1976) pp. 194-196.

or 'William Tunncliffe of Longton'. The toast at a celebration was often to 'the town and the trade' where those assembled lived and worked. Areas differed widely in character so that 'the Rocks', Northwood or Bryan Street, Hanley had notorious reputations whereas in Stoke, 'you have a better class of population'.<sup>9</sup> The growth of new suburbs at the end of the 19th century notwithstanding the lives of the potters remained highly 'district-centred'.<sup>10</sup> Between 1902 and 1910 there was fierce controversy over proposals to federate the Six Towns into one county borough as each town zealously guarded its own identity and independence.<sup>11</sup>

Within the districts and neighbourhoods, potters, their families and their kin developed patterns of social relations which helped bind these areas together. From the available evidence, local status, mutual respect and assistance were strong parts of neighbourhood codes. Co-workers and neighbours regularly saw to it that families afflicted by ill-health, accidents or poverty were given aid, whilst preserving the independence of the assisted. In 1907, a 33 year old woman and her eight year old daughter only received 5s. 3d. per week compensation from the firm where she contracted lead poisoning. Her neighbours temporarily ensured that she had at least the basic necessities of life.<sup>12</sup> In 1910 a woman asked how she coped with illness and unemployment replied: 'We

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9. S. Advertiser, 23 May, p.5 and 4 Jan., 1908, p.5. Warrilow, History of Stoke, p.405.

10. Victoria County History, Vol. 8, p.52. Dawley, Class and Community, p.230. H. Mcleod as cited in M. Daunton, Coal Metropolis. Cardiff 1870-1914 (Leicester University Press, 1977), p.143.

11. P. Gazette, 1 April, p.437 and 1 April 1908, p.472; Warrilow, History of Stoke, p.217. Victoria County History, *ibid.*, in 1910 the Borough of Stoke-on-Trent was created to cover all the Six Towns. L. Tillier, Studies in the Sources of Arnold Bennett's Novels (Paris 1949) p.66ff.

12. HMI Factories Report, 1907, p.170, Mrs. A. and E.F.

had to manage. The neighbours were very good and helped the children. My husband was not at work, and he looked after me'. Unofficial midwives and 'wise women' were local sources of medical advice and help. The nursing arrangements for infants were also neighbourhood based, usually reserved as occupations for the elder women who did not work on the potbank. Although such support strengthened the social ties of an area, mutual assistance had observable limits. Assumptions were never made about access to homes or involvement in domestic decisions. Respectability was founded on independence and self-determination, no matter how poor you were. This was what puzzled the middle-class settlement workers from outside the potteries, in Fenton: when they tried to open creches for the potters in the 1900s, nobody attended. As the settlement head found out, 'it was said by the working people that it was taking the bread out of the mouths of the elderly people'.<sup>13</sup>

It was these local codes of behaviour and social relations which helped to shape the potters' union structure and its activities. The linkage of the potter's home and family with his or her union and the role of the neighbourhood street collector have already been noted. During disputes local rules of dependence and equity found expression. For example, striking potters at Doulton's collected money in a cigar box outside the factory gates and then divided the collection between the strikers' families. In the 1907 disputes union collectors gave out

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13. S. Gould, The Frobishers, p.115ff. Physical Deterioration C<sup>ee</sup>, 1904, Appendix IV, p.127. T. Hawley, Pottery Life and Character (n.d. 1900?) p.29. Interview with E. Grocott. 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup>, Q.11789. Physical Deterioration C<sup>ee</sup>, Q.9024.Cf: R. Roberts, The Classic Slum, pp. 9 & 15. A. Tovey, interview in P. Thompson, The Edwardians, p.334.

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financial assistance to union and non-union strikers in their areas given the poverty among certain occupations. Workers on strike established their own local distress committees, often in association with the local workingmen's clubs. In 1907, one club organised relief to 179 families during the sanitary strike. Demonstrations and meetings respected traditional locations and rituals.<sup>14</sup> Local allegiances were part of the union's social texture. Factory or neighbourhood 'Glee parties' and choirs provided entertainment. Charity collections for the Haywood hospital or the Red Cross were organised on the potbank or in the surrounding district.<sup>15</sup> For those who flaunted local codes of behaviour the reaction of their neighbours could be swift and violent. In 1907 John Woburton defied a strike call at his sanitary works. His home was besieged by his fellow pressers and neighbours with Henry Adams leading the shouts of 'you nob stick'.<sup>16</sup> It was the detailed knowledge of these local relationships and customs which provided the bases of Booth, Parkes, Clowes and Tunncliffe union authority who each lived and worked in the area they organised.<sup>17</sup>

The community and its attendant social relationships could clearly affect the nature of class consciousness among the potters. Thompson implicitly located the generation of class consciousness in the

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14. Interview with E. Ellis; Sam Clowes Scrapbook, 30 Mar., 2 & 5 April, 1907. See also, Cutman, Work, Culture and Society, p.61. Young and Willmott, Family and Kinship in East London, p.113. Francis and Smith, The Fed, p.7. Stearns, 'Measuring the evolution of strike movements', p.27.

15. S. Clowes Scrapbook, 30 Mar., 1907. CATU COLL, Financial Ledger I, 1 Oct., 1907. D39, frontispiece to collector's notebook. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1916, p.651.

16. S. Clowes, Scrapbook, 17 April, 1907.

17. P. Gazette, 1 Dec., 1923, p.1999. S. Sentinel, 26 March, 1928. P. Gazette, 1 Dec., 1908, p.1397; 1 Mar., 1918, p.235; 1 May, 1922, p.706; 1 May, p.504 & 1 Oct., 1919, p.1109. See also, C.R. Walker, Steeltown (New York 1950) p.26.

community.<sup>18</sup> He sees class as highly subjective, in that 'class is defined by men as they live their own history, and, in the end, this is its only definition'. Whilst there may be objective determinants of class consciousness, class arises, he argues, as people perceive their productive relations within the wider 'ensemble of social relations', informed as they are by inherited expectations. Class and class consciousness involved not only a person's relation to the means of production but the perception of class derived from his experience of his position, or his group's position in relation to other people and groups. Class consciousness was mediated by particular cultural contexts. Therefore a reconstruction of the class consciousness of the potters necessitates combining what is already known of the potters' experience and interpretation of work on the potbank, in the family and in the neighbourhood with the potters' relations with employers, local leaders and groups outside the workplace.

However, the degree of class consciousness could be affected by a number of pressures which historians have identified. The apparent viability and stability of the economic system influenced the propensity for class opposition. Social fragmentation among workers is regarded as critical to the strength of collective action and consciousness. In his study of shipbuilding, Reid argues that 'while all workers shared a common subordination to their employers, it was a subordination integrally linked to sectional divisions' which weakened their sense of class

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18. E.P. Thompson, The Making of the English Working Class (Harmondsworth, 1963, 1968 edn.), pp. 9-12 and B. Palmer, A Culture in Conflict, p.xvi. See Also: M. Lynn McDougall, 'Consciousness and community: the workers of Lynn, 1830-1850', Journal of Social History, Fall 1978, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 129 & 140. S. Meacham, A Class Apart, pp. 7-14, 135 and 200.

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identity.<sup>19</sup> The structure and activity of elite groups and their relations with others could modify class awareness. Moreover, workers may act collectively yet they may not necessarily see themselves in opposition or antagonism to other classes.<sup>20</sup> The collective activities of the potters, in their union and in other groupings, will be examined as well as their ideology. The aim is to discover whether the potters were merely an introverted, interest group or were they highly aware of their status leading them to try and change the inequalities existing between them and other classes.

The pottery owner's attempt to establish his authority and the pottery worker's acceptance or rejection of management control were not confined to the social relations of the potbank but were continued in public. In the textile industry down to 1900 employers enjoyed an extensive command of politics, municipal affairs and local institutions. The South Wales mine owners found little need to demonstrate their authority in that way since the strength of their industrial power was abundantly clear.<sup>21</sup> The role of the pottery owners is much less obvious.

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19. Reid, 'The Division of Labour', pp. 231-235. Dawley, Class and Community, pp. 230-236.

20. Foster, 'Nineteenth century towns: a class dimension', pp. 179-192. G. Stedman Jones' review of Foster in

21. Joyce, Work, Society and Politics, p.4. Williams, 'The Coalowners', p.108. See also, A. Briggs, Victorian Cities (1963) p.38. Daunton, Coal Metropolis, p.127. P. Joyce, review of J. Clarke, C. Critcher and R. Johnson (eds.), Working Class Culture. Studies in History and Theory (1979), Social History, Oct. 1981, Vol. 6, No. 3, p.394. E. Thompson, 'Eighteenth century English society: class struggle without class', Social History, May 78, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 135-136. G. Stedman Jones, 'Class expression versus social control', History Workshop, 1977, pp. 162-170. Joyce, Thompson and Jones are rightly critical of the functionalist use of the concept of social control whereby employers are said to have successfully established psychological control over workers in the community without challenge. For an example of the latter view see G.J. Barnsby, Social Conditions in the Black Country 1800-1900 (IPS Wolverhampton 1980) pp. 235-248.

Firstly their cohesive strength was not uniformly strong. To some workers it appeared that 'all the masters' families were related'. For example, Edmund Leigh in 1906 married the sister of Arthur Wilkinson, master potter of Burslem, and in 1910, the Wild and Poole pottery families were united in marriage. The evidence for inter-marriage between the pottery owners' families suggests it was more characteristic of the larger firms.<sup>22</sup> In the absence of the manuscript census we know relatively little of the smaller sized companies. The manufacturers' associations were never uniformly supported yet a central group of families did become more active and influential than others. A comparison of the membership and leadership of the trade committees with the chamber of commerce indicates that the Wedgwoods, Johnsons, Baileys, Ridgways, Leighs and Grimwades were the dominant figures. Many of these larger, old-established owners used the solicitor, Llewellyn and Mr. Bullock the accountant to provide a unifying link among them during trade disputes and debates over local issues.<sup>23</sup>

The impact of the pottery owners was perceived differently within the Potteries. To some the larger pottery manufacturers had an absentee image. During an inquiry in 1904 a resident was asked

Is it not true that the owners of factories live somewhere outside in the country?

She replied

Yes, and many of the big ones do not even drive in.<sup>24</sup>

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22. Interview with M. Beresford. R.L. Smyth, 'The British pottery industry, 1970-1977', North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies, 1977, Vol. 17, p.65. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1906, pp. 823 & 920; 1 June, 1907, p.688; 1 Mar., 1909, p.331 and 1 July, p.804 & 1 Nov., 1910, p.1273. 1924 Wage Inquiry, p.71b. H045/1018/B12393, letter from the joint committee of allied pottery manufactures to the Home Office, 10 Sept., 1900. See Also, Benwell, The Making of a Ruling Class, p.31.

23. P. Gazette, 1 Mar., 1906, p.353 & 1 June, 1919, p.616. S. Advertiser 22 May, 1909.

24. M. Garnett to the Physical Deterioration C<sup>ee</sup>, Qs. 9161 and 9206.



The Aynsleys lived at Blythe Bridge; the Johnsons were members of the North Staffordshire hounds; Eliot Meakin owned Creswell Hall and lived near Francis Benham at Stafford. Local town leaders such as alderman Green complained in 1907, that 'Stoke suffered from the fact that many of its leading men live out of the town. They were never to be seen in Stoke at night time'. A radical such as Gertrude Tuckwell agreed in 1911 that 'the richer class has fled before the cloud, and made its home among the green fields and wooded districts'. Outsiders concluded that the Potteries had no 'west end' and was to a great extent devoid of a 'residential leisured class ... they are all working people' in the Six Towns.<sup>25</sup>

The potbank owners may not have displayed a clear collective social cohesion and many did not live in the Potteries. However their status and image was to a large extent derived from particular forms of public activity and display. Some of the potbank frontages and entrances were clear attempts to visually demonstrate the position and wealth of the owner. John Aynsley's factory in Sutherland road was a good example with its arched entrance, Venetian windows and pediment along with numerous cornices and quoins. Potbanks such as Johnsons, Doulton's or Mintons were among the most famous buildings in the Potteries.<sup>26</sup> In terms of action

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25. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1907, pp. 345 & 401; 1 Jan., 1908, p.91 and 1 Nov., 1911, p.1366. Priestley, English Journey, p.197. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1911, p.1246, although Tuckwell's comments were meant to be polemical. W. Claxton, In the Potteries (n.d. 1913?), p.16. Cf. Daunton, Coal Metropolis, pp. 125-132 and Foster, 'Nineteenth century towns', p.192.

26. D.M. Smith, 'Industrial Architecture in the Potteries', North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies, 1965, Vol. 5, pp. 81-94. S. Advertizer, 8 Aug., 1908. See also G.H. Martin, 'The town as palimpsest' in H.J. Dyos, The Study of Urban History (1968) p.155. Cf. D. Cannadine, 'The Transformation of Civic Ritual in Modern Britain: The Colchester Oyster Feast', Past and Present, No. 94, Feb., 1982, pp. 107-130.

many manufacturers continued their paternalism outside their factories, usually in the town or district where the factory was located. The assumption behind contemporary reports of pottery owners' lives was that being a master naturally involved becoming a benefactor. Traditionally and throughout the period manufacturers played their parts as paternalists to the full.<sup>27</sup> Moakins were recognised to be 'large benefactors' and of Cartwright Edwards it was said, in 1909, that there was 'not a benevolent or philanthropic organisation he has not assisted'. The spread of types of largesse was considerable. Gibsons in 1906 gave £1,000 to provide meals and clothing for their local elementary school. John Aynsley was the main backer behind the cottage hospital of his home town Longton, while the Twyford family underwrote the Hanley museum. Thomas Taylor gave an 'annual treat' to the 200 poorest children in Hanley. During the depressed trade of 1909 certain masters felt it was their duty to help relieve the local distress among the workers.<sup>28</sup> The war also provided them with opportunities to exhibit their generosity: in 1917 some china manufacturers proudly announced they had purchased a 'motor ambulance' for the troops. Female members of the masters' families were also active. In 1918 the Misses Audrey and Phoebe Wedgwood called together a local meeting to consider the shortage of workers' housing. On Christmas day 1909, Mrs. Cecil Wedgwood and Mrs. Johnson gave the children in Stoke Workhouse a gift of a tree and afternoon tea.<sup>29</sup>

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27. J.C. Wedgwood, Staffordshire Pottery and its History (n.d. 1911?) passim for the charitable and philanthropic activities of employers in the 19th century.

28. A. Bennett, The Matador of the Five Towns (1912) p.312. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., p.212; 1 April, p.437, 1 July, 1906, pp. 825 & 938 and 1 April, 1909, p.445. S. Advertizer, 9 Jan., 1909, p.5. Cf. Joyce, op.cit., p. 169 and J. Cumber, 'The politics of charity: gender and class in late 19th century charity policy', Journal of Social History, Fall 1980, Vol. 14, No. 1, p.99.

29. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1917, pp. 602 & 696; 1 May, 1918, p.464. S. Advertizer, 2 Jan., 1909, p.3.

The press always welcomed such behaviour warmly. Their verdict on the kindness of the Wedgwood ladies was that 'another generation of the Wedgwood family shows a disposition to maintain the high standard of life'. To many people these activities were born of unalloyed generosity and boosted the prestige of the pottery masters considerably. A report on the Johnson firm pointed out that 'the community was greatly indebted to such men as the Johnson brothers, whose foresight, enterprise, and business ability found regular employment for nearly 3,000 workpeople'. W.H. Grindley was spoken of almost apologetically since he was 'not a local leader', as he clearly was expected to be given the importance of his firm; he redeemed himself by being a 'great benefactor'.<sup>30</sup> The influence of these kinds of actions and attitudes for the social relations of the Potteries is shown by the souvenir programme of the Hanley TUC of 1905. The Meakin Concerts, funded by George Meakin and his contribution of one third of Queen Victoria's jubilee fund in 1887 were proudly announced and the contemporary charitable works of the masters reported as worthy of praise. The photographs of Noah Parkes and Thomas Pickin the pottery union leaders, appear in the programme along with the full page portrait of the Duchess of Sutherland.<sup>31</sup> The image presented was one of apparent acceptance of the leading roles of the pottery owners and their associates in the public life of the Potteries.

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30. Op.cit., 26 Jan., 1907. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1926, p.594.

31. S. Advertizer, 4 Jan., 1908 and 2 Jan., 1909. TUC Meeting and Potteries History 1905, pp. 38, 51 & 68. Kelly's Directory 1912, pp. 284 & 387 for the extent of the Sutherland family estate in North Staffordshire. The Duke of Sutherland entertained the TUC of 1905 at his country estate, Trentham Hall, TUC Annual Report, p.41.

Employers and their families also took up positions in local institutions and organisations. The manufacturers concerned were clearly seen as leaders and figures of authority. The sample of 100 masters in Table 15 shows that 24% were magistrates, 40% were councillors, 10% held office in political bodies, 23% were involved in philanthropic organisations and 7% were found to have held office in a sporting or social body. Their participation was spread throughout the Six Towns. Traditions of employers' involvement in local public life were strong. George Meakin's appointment as JP in 1906 was warmly greeted since he was 'following his father's tradition with public and charitable movements'. Ten of the 26 new magistrates in 1914 were pottery manufacturers.<sup>32</sup> Nor were employers merely remote figureheads. Ezra Bourne, in common with other masters, not only funded chapel building but took 'an active part' in preaching. He was 'an earnest Wesleyan' and had 'held every office a layman could hold in connexion with the Wesleyan Chapel at Burslem'. In 1913, Daniel Linyard, the jet and rockingham manufacturer, was steward of the Alsager Primitive Methodist circuit. In the sample of manufacturers non-conformists outnumbered Anglicans by 2:1. The Potteries were a 'stronghold of non-conformity' for both masters and workers.<sup>33</sup>

While workers did not simply follow their employers to chapel or join the same institutions the image of the employer was clearly portrayed

32. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1906, p.585; 1 Feb., 1914, p.214 and 1 June, 1920, p.801. See Table 15, Chapter 4 above.

33. P. Gazette, 1 Oct., 1906, p.1164; 1 July, 1908, p.815; 1 Feb., 1909, p.207; 1 Feb., p.157 and 1 May, 1913, p.584 and 1 June, 1919, p.610. Tillier, Studies in the Sources of Arnold Bennett's Novels, p.25. Victoria County History, Vol. 8, p.279ff for the 1870-1900 'great era of chapel building in the Potteries' and the decline of religious observance from the early 1900s.

in terms which might inhibit class antagonism. The manufacturers' position as provider of employment on the potbank was enhanced by his role in other spheres of local life. His authority took on a wider dimension. An image of trust and probity emerged from his actions in friendly and building societies, sports clubs, in organisations for the blind or on hospital boards.<sup>34</sup> Clearly the pottery owners felt these positions were significant as they figure so prominently in the public reports of their careers and life styles. Even the local labour press admitted that 'our leaders in political, social and religious movements are manufacturers'. Employers were able to use their image as leaders both in the workplace and in the community when contentious issues arose. During the lead poisoning legislation campaign in 1906 one outsider was so impressed by the dominant and authoritative influence exercised by the masters over the question that he reported that the owners had in psychological terms 'established a reign of terror in the district'. This image of authority certainly led manufacturers to ascribe to themselves the role of leaders and spokesmen for the community who defined public notions of wisdom and rationality. Hence William Burton assumed in 1900 that he spoke for all potters when he outlined his 'wise settlement' of the 'lead question'.<sup>35</sup>

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34. Hospitals: P. Gazette, 1 Aug. 1919, p.842 and S. Advertiser, 13 Jan., 1906. Building societies: P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1910, p.90; 1 Feb., 1915, p.187. Friendly Societies: S. Advertiser, 14 Dec., 1907. North Staffordshire Provident Association, 29 June, 1921 (Stoke 1921) p.1. Sports clubs: P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1913, p.157 & 1 Sept., 1918, p.713. Examples of employers who were members of a number of organisations: P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1907, p.1030; 1 Nov., 1910, p.1256 and 1 April, 1914, p.463.

35. Staffordshire Knot, 21 Feb., 1891. P. Gazette, 1 Sept., p.1047 reprint of report by Claud Blake of the Manchester Sunday Chronicle. C.A. Oldham, 'Burslem, the Development of Statutory Bodies and their interactions with local institutions, 1850-1910', unpublished M.A. thesis, Keele, 1974, 'The Pottery Firms' passim. W. Burton, letter to Home Office, 8 June, 1900, PRO. H045/1018/B12393P.

Pottery manufacturers' activity outside the potbank included participation in politics. Evidence of owners' political allegiance is, however, fragmentary although the actions of the leading figures are fairly well recorded. A high proportion of manufacturers were councillors (see Table 15). Harry Shirley was on Hanley council from 1893-1910 and was mayor twice. Party allegiance was not readily apparent since the prevailing ethos for many councillors was that council work was really financial management.<sup>36</sup> Elijah Bain, the china maker was therefore elected to Fenton council in 1908 not on any political platform. His appeal was apolitical and based on his being 'closely associated with the administration of the town since 1885'.<sup>37</sup> Owners traded heavily on their image as leaders in local institutions as a basis for their almost natural suitability for council office. Indeed, some manufacturers blatantly united their council and business positions. Aaron Edwards, 'the popular Mayor of Longton' used the coincidence of his mayoralty and his fiftieth year in business in 1908 to take his 530 workers on a celebration to Blackpool. The assumption of leadership in the affairs of the local authorities by 'the trade' was demonstrated clearly when A.P. Llewellyn, secretary of the manufacturers' association, was appointed without question in 1908 as presiding officer of the federation poll. Moreover, it was the apolitical atmosphere of council

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36. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1906, p.1278; 1 Feb., p.202 & 1 Mar., 1910, p.285 and 1 Jan., 1921, p.120. F. Bealey, 'Politics in Newcastle-under-Lyme', North Staffordshire Journal of Field Studies, Vol. 5, 1965, p.71. See also, Benwell, Making of a Ruling Class, p.42.

37. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1908, p.585; 1 April, p.462 and 1 May, 1910, p.579.

elections and business created by the masters and dominant groups which made it so difficult for workers' representatives to gain access by using party political arguments.<sup>38</sup>

For the principal owners parliamentary politics was important. During the elections of the period manufacturers were recognised to have taken 'a prominent part' in electioneering. There was no uniformity of allegiance. In 1922 it was observed that the 'manufacturers differ in their politics as much as in their methods' of production.<sup>39</sup> Thomas Twyford contested North West Staffordshire for the Tories in 1907 and was president of the area Conservative association. Francis Benham was a pillar of the county party and John Hall was chairman of Burslem conservatives. Prominent Tory backers included the Aynsleys, Robert Copeland, Arnold Greatbank, S. Mear, H.J. Colclough, E.J. Ridgway, H. Boulton and Enoch Massey.<sup>40</sup> The balance of the owners' support went towards the Liberals and was based largely on the strength of manufacturer non-conformity and its traditional ties with Liberalism.<sup>41</sup> The political alliance of certain owners with working potters' representatives had ensured a traditional Liberal domination of the constituencies of the Six Towns. The Liberals numbered amongst themselves some of the largest manufacturers in the Potteries. They included Robert Twyford, Harold Plant, Leonard Grimwade, Edmund Leigh (president of the North West

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38. Op.cit., 1 June, 1908, p.706. S. Advertiser, 4 Jan., 1908, p.5.

39. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1922, p.1245.

40. S. Advertiser, 6 Jan., 1906, p.6; 27 Nov., 1909, p.3. Pottery Gazette, 1 May, 1907, p.598; 1 Nov., 1911, p.1366; 1 Aug., 1915, p.897 and 1 March, 1919, p.269.

41. H. Pelling, A Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910 (1967) p.273. P. Anderton, 'The Liberal Party of Stoke on Trent', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Keele, 1977, passim and p.111.

Staffordshire Liberal Association), Walter Meakin, (candidate for West Staffordshire) and Sydney Malkin (candidate for Burslem and Tunstall).<sup>42</sup>

Although constituents voted according to a wide array of influences and issues it was observed how manufacturers of all political persuasions attempted to use their roles as local leaders in political questions. Some were quite open about the mutual duties of employer and community. The Conservative candidate, Sir James Heath, told an election meeting during his campaign in 1906 that his firm paid out £3,000 a week in wages and so 'Kingsgrove did owe him something'.<sup>43</sup> In a more subtle way candidates often made use of the industry as a reference point for their arguments. They turned national issues such as tariff reform or national insurance into pottery industry questions. These questions were presented in very inclusive and unitary terms. Candidates spoke broadly of the trade, always avoiding the differing relationship of master and operative to work. Edmund Leigh in 1906 worked whole speeches around the notion of 'efficiency' in the trade and how this truth was recognised in 'the just claims of workmen'. In opposing the campaign against lead poisoning manufacturers emphasised the cost to the industry of the remedies suggested by workers and trade unionists.<sup>44</sup> Manufacturers such as Leigh were trying to transfer their efforts to publicly define the 'correct' approach for the industry and community on a given issue, to

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42. Anderton, op.cit., Chapter 3, pp. 108 & 113ff. for the 19th century alliance between potters' leaders and the local liberal manufacturers and the potters' unsuccessful attempt to present an independent working man's candidate given the division among the workers of the Potteries of the 1870s and 1880s. S. Advertiser, 13 Jan., 1906, p.7; 20 July, 1907 p.5. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1906, p.920; 1 Aug., 1910, p.920 and 1 Jan., 1922, p.116.

43. S. Advertiser, 13 Jan., 1906, p.7.

44. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1906, p.920. WTUL, Quarterly Report, April, 1911, p.11. See also B. Palmer, Culture in Conflict, p.98 for an example of the 'mutuality of interests' used to bind manufacturer and mechanic.



the political sphere. The following explanation given for the Conservative defeats in 1906 is based on the assumption that working potters should adopt the political stance of their employers. The observer was clearly surprised at their failure to do so:

It is very difficult to find a reasonable explanation of the strong attitude taken up by the operatives in the pottery industry in the latter towns. For months past the employers, with one or two exceptions, have been advocating a change in the fiscal policy of the country, which would give the local trade a better chance as against Germany and other foreign made china. The results show that no argument of the kind have yet influenced the rank and file of the workers. 45

The pottery manufacturers sought to use their public presence in order to establish the dominance of their values and codes of acceptable behaviour. But as the above comments on the 1906 election show, workers did not totally accept and adopt the judgement of their masters in the community any more than on the potbank. Clearly the operatives were affected by the sheer weight and traditions of employer Liberal opinion and the extent of their activity. Yet the working potters constructed their own modes of entry to public life. They formed their own associations and alliances with other members of the community which in turn shaped their class awareness and political ideology.<sup>46</sup> The potters' participation in the public life of the Potteries helped explain both the form their class consciousness took and the continual tension which existed between a spontaneous radicalism and the emergence of a pragmatic reformism.

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45. S. Advertiser, 20 January, 1906, p.3.

46. For a similar view see H. Dutton and J. King, 'The limits of paternalism: the cotton tyrants of North Lancashire, 1836-54', Social History, 1981, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp. 59 and 72-73. J. McCalman, 'Respectability and working-class politics in late-Victorian London', Historical Studies, April, 1980, Vol. 19, no. 74.

The institutions which were set up and run by workers were seen by many potters as a means of achieving a respectable and independent status within their community. By 1908 it was generally thought that even the less skilled workers in the Potteries had now developed 'a sense of respectability and usefulness which ... they did not previously possess'. Trade union activity was not singled out as the vehicle for this change but was one in a list of bodies including the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Association,<sup>47</sup> the workingmen's clubs and the WEA. John Ward MP was especially enthusiastic about such institutions. He believed that via these associations 'if the working men could only put their principles forward, if they were fair and reasonable ... they would always get something like decent and humane treatment'. The workingmen's clubs were a good example with seven new premises opened between 1900 and 1910. At the extension of the Stoke club in 1906 it was remarked that 'the club ought to be a centre of political and social activity and should aim at improving the status of the people in the locality'. The clubs became one means of asserting an independent existence, entirely separate from the employers. The Hanley club celebrated its seventh anniversary in 1908 and had become a 'necessity to the workmen of Hanley' with an income of £1,368 and 38 organisations meeting there.<sup>48</sup> The potters' union and the local labour council allied with the clubs to

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47. S. Advertiser, 18 Jan., 1908, p.5 and 4 April, 1908. See also, Fox, 'Boot and Shoe Union', p.329. Walker, Steeltown, p.35. P. Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (1978) p.176.

48. Labour Gazette reports on the pottery industry 1902-1910. S. Advertiser, 15 Sept., 1906, 8 Feb., p.5 and 9 May, 1908, p.7. S. Clowes scrapbook, 27 March and 4 April, 1907. Pollard, History of Labour in Sheffield, p.197 for a similar local growth of workingmen's clubs in this period, some of which were tied to political interests.

develop their own education classes and later to organise the WEA activities.<sup>49</sup> The Industrial Co-operative Societies and Women's Co-operative Guild played a similar role in helping workers to enjoy a life separate from employer organisations and schemes.<sup>50</sup>

As potters endeavoured to enhance their public status and respectability they were drawn into associations which blurred their individual and collective sense of class awareness and opposition. The agitation of 1906 for the representation of Thomas Edwards and Noah Parkes on the local bench was firmly based on a sense of labour deserving representation alongside other political groups. The campaign was constructed around the rights of participation. However, in 1911 the appointment of Clowes was publicly seen as recognition for his being 'worthy and respected'. It was also said of Parkes and Edwards that their elevation was largely apolitical since 'they qualified for the position as labour representatives, but also because of their sterling worth and valuable service for the town'.<sup>51</sup> The potters' union seems to have placed great store on gaining representation on local bodies. In the light of the prevailing values of public service the potters seem to have desired the recognition and status which membership of these institutions bestowed. They appear to have implicitly accepted the role of representatives of a sectional interest group which could influence and reform by collaborating on these bodies with the traditional leaders of the area, the employers.

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49. S. Advertiser, 6 Feb., 1909; 12 Dec., 1908, p.5; 7 July 1909, p.5 and 16 Oct., p.5. CATU COLL, NEC, Mins, 8 June, Emergency C<sup>o</sup>, 9 Oct. 1920.

50. Cost of Living of the Working Classes. Report of an Enquiry by the Board of Trade into Working Class Housing and Retail Prices (Cd. 3864), 1908, p.217. S. Advertiser, 18 Jan., 1908, p.5. CATU COLL, Finance C<sup>o</sup>, 14 March, 1918 and Annual Delegation, 1922, p.111. S. Advertiser, 4 Dec., 1897, p.5. See also J. Liddington & J. Norris, One Hand Tied Behind Us, p.41.

51. P. Gazette, 1 April, p.469 and p.585, 1906; 1 Sept., 1911, p.1036; 1 April, 1913, p.447 and 1 Feb., 1914, p.214.

The service of pottery workers and union officials on local committees and boards did not lead to a radical overhaul of the institutions concerned. The dominant image of the social relations between employers and labour from these associations was never one of class war. For example, the North Staffordshire Infirmary was a prominent concern of the potters, especially given their intimate acquaintance with industrial disease. Sam Clowes was evidently more proud of being appointed to the board of the infirmary than becoming an MP.<sup>52</sup> It was during his time on the board that Clowes formed a personal friendship with the Johnson brothers.<sup>53</sup> In 1926 we discover the general secretary giving the prizes at the firm's whist drive in aid of the infirmary and praising the £10,000 that Johnsons had donated.<sup>54</sup> During the period, as manufacturers increasingly recognised union organisation at the formal levels so the union pressed for representation on more bodies. These included the Federation Committee of 1908, the war pensions and disabled boards, the development corporation of 1918 and a number of charity ventures. The potters seem to have decided that in order to make any impact on the public life of the Six Towns they had to observe and operate by the established conventions: to act outside these rules would condemn them to isolation they argued. As with collective bargaining from the potters' officials perception, the acceptance of the union and working potters into the public sphere as an independent force was an immense achievement given their previous exclusion. It was the strength

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52. S. Advertiser, 21 April, 1906, p.7. Interview with D. Robinson, S. Clowes' daughter.

53. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, 1916, p.68 and 1925, p.130. NEC mins., 6 Oct. and 2 Nov., 1917.

54. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1926, p.595.

of local conventions of public service and desire for official recognition which led the union leaders to co-operate so closely with pottery employers during the war. Fund raising was seen as a duty and opposing the government's conscription programme became a broad issue of 'the industry' against the state quite separate from the continuing conflict at the workplace.<sup>55</sup>

As the potters tried to influence the administrative and legislative systems they forged alliances which modified their class awareness. There were many contradictions in these relationships. During the potters' campaign for protective legislation regarding lead poisoning the union joined forces with one of the richest and largest land owners in the country, the Duchess of Sutherland. The Duchess, in her local letters and speeches against lead use, disowned the politics of labour groups yet her local popularity made the union only too pleased to receive her backing against powerful employer attacks.<sup>56</sup> The liaison with Sarah Bennett was also ambiguous. Radical enough to chain herself to the House of Commons and to be put in Pentonville for suffrage agitation she was nevertheless a lady of private income who dispensed charity to pottery workers during disputes and periods of unemployment.<sup>57</sup> Following the

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55. NCPI mins. 11 July, 1918. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1907, p.718. CATU COLL, NEC mins. 2 Jan., 1918; Annual Delegation 1918, p.80. NEC mins. 19 Feb., 1920 and 14 July, 1917. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1917, p.178. Employers and workers opposed the successive 'comb outs' of men since craft or skilled workers, with their recipe knowledge were so difficult to replace given the wide differences in production technique outlined in chapter 2.1. Production often stopped, resulting in losses of profit and wages.

56. See Footnote 31. See her appendix in H. Owen's The Staffordshire Potter, pp. 271-306. P. Gazette, 2 April, p.409, 1 Aug., p.889 & 1027, 1900. She praised 'the practical assistance they (WTUL) have given to the serious cases of lead poisoning' yet made it clear that 'with the political propaganda of the WTUL I have no direct connection'.

57. S. Clowes scrapbook, 17 April, 1907. S. Advertiser, 17 Feb., 1906 p.7 and 23 Nov., 1907, p.5. WTUL Quarterly Report, Jan., 1904, p.40. Parkin, 'Autobiography of a Trade Unionist', p.XII; 'she was a real benefactor'. SRO 3506/1/13, Mins. of Wolstanton and Burslem Poor Law Minute Book, 14 June, 1903.

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tradition of Arlidge, Drs. Reid, Moody and Shufflebotham were advisers to the union on technical questions during the campaigns of the period. All the doctors were active progressive liberals. In each case, from the Duchess to the doctors, these individuals were held in high esteem for their practical work and help, by ordinary working potters, as the motions to the annual delegations of 1921 and 1922 show.<sup>58</sup> The rhetoric of revolution and class conflict did not have a ready audience among many of the workforce who could not easily relate the actions of an Arlidge or Bennett with class oppression.

In a similar way the influence of religious feeling and attachments on the potters was curiously mixed. As Charles Shaw demonstrated, in the 19th century Potteries non-conformity held trade unionism in contempt and suspicion for a long time. The craft unions had therefore been assiduous in their display of respect for the dominant local faith of the workforce.<sup>59</sup> The Potteries Examiner was careful to use religious texts in its editorials and unionists continued to anchor their speeches on the Bible throughout our period.<sup>60</sup> Albert Stanley found it prudent to preach in Bethesda chapel as well as addressing mass meetings in the nearby Victoria Hall.<sup>61</sup> Around the turn of the century the constraint placed on union membership and activity by non-conformism was eroded. Firstly, the chapel and the Sunday school provided useful training grounds

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58. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, p.113. 1911 Pottery Regulations Inquiry, Q. 808ff. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1906, p.1413. S. Advertiser, 6 June, 1908, 4 July, 1908 and 25 Sept., 1909. Dr. Moody for example was president of Hanley Young Liberals in 1909.

59. C. Shaw, When I was a Child, p.192. Warburton, Trade Union Organisation, pp. 73 & 123-124. Cf. Walker, Juteopolis, p.53ff for the retarding effect of non-conformism on trade unionism in the 19th century.

60. Shaw, *ibid.* P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1907, p.1419 and 1 April, 1910, p.434.

61. S. Advertiser, 7 March, 1908, a local miner's leader.

for union activists. Thomas Evans, Thomas Edwards and William Machin, for examine, were all active lay preachers and teachers.<sup>62</sup> Secondly, in the 1900s the so-called 'labour question' became a serious issue for the local churches and was intensely debated. One outcome of this discourse was that a significant number of non-conformists left their church to form separate labour churches, and in some cases ethical societies, because of their dissatisfaction with their fellow methodists or baptists views on labour. Even the established chapels were drawn into the disputes of the period and supported workers during, for example, the Newhall dispute of 1908. The ambivalent influence of nonconformity on the potters' consciousness was continued therefore even in a period of declining religious observance.<sup>63</sup>

Finally the need for respect and recognition within the Potteries for organised labour was largely explained by the way the ruling groups in the area had set out the issue. Employers, churchmen, politicians and local leaders took great care to ensure that questions, such as trade unionism, were presented in their terms. Potters had to respond in similar terms and employ appropriate concepts and images if they were to ever gain access to the established decision making arenas. Unions had been depicted as irrelevant, unstable and unreliable: the first aim for the potters was to prove that the charge, and the reason for their exclusion was untrue. In 1908 a local journal carefully distanced the

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62. P. Gazette, 1 Dec., 1923, p.2002; 1 Jan., 1911, p.51 and S. Advertizer 15 Dec., 1906.

63. CATU COLL, L454, letter from W. Mitchell, Pastor of Hope Congregational Church to S. Clowes, 1908, offering help and support during the New Hall strike. Victoria County History, Vol. 8, p.279ff. S. Advertizer, 17 Feb. and 14 July, 1906; 12 & 26 Jan. and 5 Oct., 1907 and 24 Oct., 1908. See also Forman, Industrial Town. Self Portrait of St. Helens (1979), p.176. Hobsbawm, Labour's Turning Point, p.34.

union in the public's eyes by describing the arguments of union officials concerning the inequality of the arbitration board as 'wild statements'.<sup>64</sup> During 1911 after a bitter dispute over wage increases (certain employers threatened the hollow ware pressers with extinction) the trade paper saw the opportunity to state what was acceptable worker behaviour. It therefore congratulated the workers on acting 'pleasantly and quietly' and commented that 'it speaks well for the good sense and restraint of the people of the Potteries'.<sup>65</sup> A group of employers commissioned a series of articles in 1910, to make union claims regarding low pay and ill-health seem unreasonable, even absurd, under the title: 'The Workers in the Potteries. A Vindication of a Much Maligned District'. In order to even gain a hearing from the population of the Six Towns the potters' union had to adopt the conventions of public action and debate, thereby blunting the resentment of class injustice which might have originally inspired them.<sup>66</sup>

## 5.2 The Potters, the Labour Movement and the State

In the first decades of this century the Potteries, in common with many other areas, witnessed the appearance and growth of local political parties organised by labour. Although there was a decisive change of workers' allegiance, the changeover was neither a smooth, inevitable

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64. P. Gazette, 1 Feb., 1908, p.169.

65. Op.cit., 1 Sept., 1911, p.1016.

66. Op.cit., 1 Mar., 1910, p.427ff. For the careful use of language in public debate to either discredit or legitimate worker or union activity see Gray, The Labour Aristocracy in Victorian Edinburgh, p.115. A. Briggs, 'The language of class in early 19th century England', in A. Briggs & J. Saviile (eds.), Essays in Labour History (1980) pp.43-73. S. & B. Webb, Industrial Democracy, p. xxvii and 565. WTUL, Quarterly Report, April, 1902, p.5.



progression nor easily accomplished. An independent political party representing labour in the Six Towns grew not only from the potters' industrial and wider social experience but also out of their relations with other industrial and political groups. How key individuals and associations reacted to the issues raised by the economic and social changes of the time, or the actions of the state, and in the light of their own traditions and experience accounts for the uneven 'rise of labour' between 1900 and 1924.<sup>67</sup>

A number of contending perspectives exist on the general development of the labour movement. One variant views the growth of the British labour's political organisations as almost inevitable.<sup>68</sup> Others have focused on the often contradictory variety of social groups, ideologies and aspirations contained within the movement as it grew.<sup>69</sup> For many the evolution is regarded as the direct political manifestation of changes in the nature of the economy and work.<sup>70</sup> The Potteries' case shows how unstable and broken was labour's political development: it was

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67. For the importance of this period for the development of an independent labour representation generally see H. Pelling, The Origins of the Labour Party (Oxford, 1965) pp. 216-228. A. Musson, Trade Union and Social History, p.11. For the North East, for example, Benwell, The Making of a Ruling Class, p.39 and for the relevance of local patterns of growth see J. Halstead and W. Lancaster, Socialist Studies (forthcoming). See also, J. Reynolds & K. Laybourn, 'The emergence of the Independent Labour Party in Bradford', International Review of Social History, Vol. XX, 1975, Part 3, pp. 313-327.

68. D. Kynaston, King Labour (1976) p.155. See especially, G. Drage, Trade Unions (1905) p.166.

69. Daunton, Coal Metropolis, p.196. B. Waites, 'The impact of the First World War on Class and Status in Britain', Journal of Contemporary History, 1976.

70. Burgess, The Challenge of Labour, p.180ff. Hobsbawm, Labour's Turning Point, p.xviii. Gray, The Labour Aristocracy, pp. 165, 177. Price, 'Labour, the labour process and the dynamics of labour history', p.17.

a product of the inherent instability of components. Undoubtedly, conflict in and around the workplace assisted the mass support of a labour party, but the experience of struggle was not easily politicised in the social and cultural climate of the Six Towns we have already described. The mediation of employers and the intervention of local values and allegiances meant that the Potteries' labour movement could not be based only on, as Willie Gallacher put it, the 'treatment of political questions in terms of workshop economics'.<sup>71</sup>

The uneven pattern of growth for labour in the Potteries can be demonstrated in election results. Liberals were dominant in the four parliamentary constituencies until the 1906-1910 period: thereafter labour gradually established its supremacy. In these years incumbent liberals moved over to labour and thereafter the new MPs were mainly labour members.<sup>72</sup> At the council level the picture is more complicated. The non-party tradition on the councils has already been noted. The first 'independent labour representatives' were William Owen and Thomas Edwards, who were elected for Burslem East Ward in November 1891.<sup>73</sup>

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71. As cited in Reynolds and Laybourn, op.cit., p.4.

72. On the development of the national Labour Party, Hunt, British Labour History, pp. 313 to 317. G.D.H. Cole, A Short History of the British Working Class Movement (1937), Vol. 11, pp. 17-183. For local election results see H. Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, pp. 270-275. J. Vincent and M. Stenton, McCalmont's Parliamentary Poll Book. British Election Results 1832-1918 (Hassocks 1971) pp. 110, 223 and 228. F. Craig, British Parliamentary Election Results, 1918-49 (Glasgow 1969) pp. 251-253. For John Ward's (MP for the Stoke Division) independent labour stance, he refused to sign the Labour Representation Committee constitution in the 1900s, see J. Saville and J. Bellamy, Dictionary of Labour Biography (1977) Vol. 4, pp. 190-193. The two exceptions to labour domination were R. Outhwaite (Liberal) in 1912 and J. Seddon (Conservative) in 1918, both in Hanley. A Labour MP replaced them in 1922.

73. Staffordshire Knot, 7 Nov., 10 Oct. & 31 Oct., 1891. Workman's Times, 26 Dec., 1890.

Their success was seen as a reflection of the union revival of the early 1890s and coincidental with the first stages of SDF and ILP involvement in the area. However, the remainder of the 1890s demonstrated how difficult it was to field independent working men candidates in the face of depressed trade and the antagonisms among both the potters' craft unions and also inside the trades council.<sup>74</sup> These were to be recurrent problems. By 1905 labour claimed 11 representatives.<sup>75</sup> In 1906, Beecheur lost his seat in Hanley, while Leese (president of Stoke ILP since 1895) was elected for Stoke with Sam Finney of the miners and Noah Parkes returned for Burslem. Yet in Hanley, labour's supposed stronghold, 'there were large majorities against the labour candidates' and only ten seats were even contested in Hanley and Stoke.<sup>76</sup> Joseph Lovatt won a seat on Hanley's council in 1907.<sup>77</sup> The new council formations of 1910 saw labour maintain its numerical presence yet still manufacturer representatives outnumbered labour's by 3 to 1.<sup>78</sup> In 1913 only six seats in the 26 wards of the Potteries were contested although three new labour members were added. In 1919 labour won 14 seats including those of Arthur Hollins and William Tunnicliffe, the potters' officials. In the 1920s several employers were elected at the expense of labour as unemployment and short time had their effect on union and party funds.<sup>79</sup>

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74. S. Sentinel, 21 & 28 Sep., 1895. Justice, 19 Nov., 1897, 5 Feb. & 25 June, 1898. Labour Leader, 18 Nov., 1899. S. Advertizer, 8 Sept., 1894, p.7.

75. TUC Meeting and Potteries History (1905) p.12, although the precise affiliation of each representative is not made clear, as between labour or lib-lab members.

76. S. Advertizer, 27 October, 1906, pp. 4-5.

77. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1907, p.1317.

78. Op.cit., 1 Nov., 1908, p.1315 and 1 April, 1910, p.462.

79. Op.cit., 1 Dec., 1913, p.1424; 1 June, p.610 & 1 Dec., 1919, p.1355 and 1 Jan., 1921, p.120. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, 1918, p.85 and Financial C<sup>ee</sup> Mins, 22 April, 1920.

Whilst recognising that the limitations on the franchise must qualify any interpretation of the general shift of allegiance from liberalism to labour the continuity of liberal support is noticeable. Pelling thought the potters' loyalty to the Liberal Party down to the 1900s 'striking'. The large manufacturer backing of the Liberals was clearly the party's mainstay given the local influence of the pottery owners.<sup>80</sup> The traditional appeal of liberal individualism to many of the craft potters was difficult for them to shake off, especially when their leaders Owen and Edwards had such lengthy ties with the party. It became even more difficult for potters to break those traditional ties as Liberals such as Dilke fought hard for progressive legislation designed specifically for the pottery industry. In one sense the conservatism of the craft potter militated against radical political change. That the local constituencies and wards did not symmetrically overlay the Six Towns, and took in outlying areas, muted the general appeal of industrial labour candidates.<sup>81</sup>

The relations of local industrial and political groups were basic features of the history of the Potteries' labour movement.<sup>82</sup> In

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80. In 1914 the franchise was still governed by the provisions of the Third Reform Act whereby only 60% of all adult males had the right to vote. Burgess, Challenge of Labour, p.96. In 1918 universal male suffrage arrived. D. Butler & J. Freeman, British Political Facts, 1900-1967 (1968 2nd edn.) p.155. Pelling, Social Geography of British Elections, pp. 270-274.

81. Astor et al, Third Winter of Unemployment, p.291. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1911, p.51. S. Sentinel, 14 Oct., 1912, p.2. R. Jenkins, Sir Charles Dilke: A Victorian Tragedy (1958) p.395. Gwynn & G. Tuckwell, Life of Sir Charles Dilke (1917), Vol. 1, pp. 351-354. Hansard, 13 July, 1900, Col. 1496. Parkin, 'Autobiography of a Trade Unionist', p.xiiii. B. Wilson, Young Oxford, Vol. II, No. 16, Jan., 1901, p.131.

82. Cf. J. Brown, From Radicalism to Socialism. Paisley Engineers, 1890-1920. Our History, No. 71 (n.d.) p.10. K.D. Buckley, Trade Unionism in Aberdeen, 1878-1900 (1955) p.136.

negative terms the long running clashes between the ovenmen and the other potters were especially divisive. The public battles between them over the federation question in 1907 and the silicosis issue were two of the noisiest examples. Thomas Edwards, the ovenmen's leader, had strong connections with the local liberal party until his death in 1911.<sup>83</sup> The actions of the North Staffordshire miners were especially relevant. Their MP, Enoch Edwards, only reluctantly joined the Labour party as a member of the Miners' Federation. The miners' leadership had long counselled the workers of the Potteries to avoid conflict at all costs. The numerical voting influence of the miners in the north west county division and Longton were especially strong.<sup>84</sup> Relations with other local unions had more positive results for the development of a separate labour consciousness. On the one hand the growth of new unions and the arrival of organisers from national unions led to competition over membership especially during 1912. Yet on the other hand, the industrial disputes of the period provided clear potential for inter-union solidarity. The bakers were very active in the early labour organisations in the 1890s and besides exchanging political theory with the potters were close allies during strikes.<sup>85</sup> The experience of regular organising and negotiating with the Navvies and other outside unions during the 1910-1920 period led to their joint political action and their backing John Ward

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83. S. Advertiser, 12 Jan. & 19 Oct., 1907; 31 July & 30 Oct., 1909. P. Gazette, 1 Jan., 1911, p.51.

84. Kelly's Directory of Staffordshire 1912, p.283. Pelling, op.cit., p.272. P. Gazette, 1 March, 1908, p.349, Edwards advised the potters that 'it were better that a strong combination should seek to improve its position step by step, both slowly and surely, than that, in an unguarded moment, they should make a mistake that might cost years to remedy'. R. Gregory, The Miners and British Politics (Oxford 1968) pp.168-173.

85. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, 1912, p.27. NEC mins, 17 Feb., 1923. S. Advertiser, 11 April, 1908.

and Tom Cusack, their local organiser, as candidates.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, as the owners had used the industry or 'the trade' in apolitical terms so the unions and labour groups learned to focus on issues common to the whole industry or area. The best example was during the 1918 reconstruction debates when the coal, iron and steel, silk and pottery unions united around the local Labour party to fight for a Board of Trade Inquiry into the Potteries' transport system.<sup>87</sup>

The North Staffordshire Trades and Labour Council helped facilitate the growing strength of labour in the region but at the same time gave clear expression to labour's divisions. The trades council fits Clinton's general conclusion on the councils nationally.<sup>88</sup> It provided a training ground for trade unionists and became a means of articulating working people's interests on a wide range of issues. The council's electioneering work was doubly vital since local labour party organisation remained partial until after the war. As Fred Shaw of the engineers' union remarked at the time, 'trade councils assisted greatly in the changing of the struggle from the industrial to the political field.'<sup>89</sup>

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86. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, p.97. Labour Gazette, 1916, p.304. T. Cusack, The 1911 Marl Strike, pp. 8-9. Cusack was especially grateful to Clowes and Coxon of the potters' union in 1911 since 'their valuable aid stood us in good stead, when the strain and anxiety began to tell severely upon myself'.

87. CATU COLL, NEC Mins, 1 June, 1918. Times I.F.T. Supplement, 7 Oct., p.158 and 4 Nov., p.186, 1918.

88. A. Clinton, The Trade Union Rank and File. Trade Councils in Britain 1900-1940 (Manchester University Press, 1977), pp. 4, 17, 20 & 50. B. Barker, 'Anatomy of reformism: the social and political ideas of the Labour leadership in Yorkshire', p.4. For a less positive view of the trade councils, S. & B. Webb, Industrial Democracy, p.269. Cole, British Trade Unionism To-day, pp. 184-185.

89. As quoted in Barker, *ibid.*

The council had been formed in 1892 as a by-product of the union revival and the potters' federation.<sup>90</sup> It seems to have grown in parallel with local union strength, benefitting especially from the appearance of a number of unskilled unions between 1900-1914. As a body it was widely representative of local union power: by 1908 the council was made up of 86 delegates representing 38 unions. The involvement of the potters was high from the outset. William Owen was the first president; Thomas Pickin was treasurer from 1892-1905; Noah Parkes held the secretary's post from 1904-1910 and Sam Clowes was treasurer from 1906.<sup>91</sup> In return the potters were well supported by the council during strike action.<sup>92</sup>

The potters made a clear mark on the council and were also intimately caught up and affected by its evolution, debates and disputes. In its early days the body expressed the main craft unions' attempts to win local recognition. In the council's own words:

the friendly settlement of trade differences has always been promoted ... By the uniform discretion, moderation and good sense of its conduct with regard to public affairs, the Council has secured the approval and loyalty of the trades it represents, and also the respect and goodwill of the general public.<sup>93</sup>

During the 1890s the council expressly refused political allegiances. After the unemployment of that decade, the aggression of the employers in the 1899 disputes and the bitterness of the early lead campaigns the

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90. Workman's Times, 9 April, 1892.

91. TUC Meeting and Potteries History 1905, pp. 5 & 11-13. S. Advertiser, Jan. 12 & 2 Feb., 1907 and 15 Feb., 1908. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1906, p.938.

92. S. Advertiser, 13 April, 1907.

93. TUC Meeting and Potteries History, p.11. S. Sentinel, 17 March, 1895.

council actively sought political alliances with the Labour churches, the ILP and SDF. In 1903 they affiliated to the national Labour Party and helped to found the Potteries' Labour Representation Committee in 1906.<sup>94</sup>

The issues which the council faced in the 1900s helped to change critically the class consciousness of the potters and other local unions. It became a public rallying point for the labour movement of the Potteries from the SDF through to the labour churches and the Clarion cyclists and field club.<sup>95</sup> The council and the potters worked out a joint campaign for state control of lead use in the industry; they argued for tighter regulation of workmen's compensation and the need for state medical insurance. The council publicly argued for state support of married women workers, the taxation of land values and revealed the inadequacy of old age pensions and the levels of food prices and manufacturers' profits in the First World War.<sup>96</sup> By far the keenest question was unemployment. The ravages of unemployment and poverty in the 1890s and 1900s were notorious and turned the council against the government but also called into question the very nature of capitalism for that generation of potters. The 'intimidation' and 'inquisition' of

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94. Justice, 30 April, 13 Aug. & 19 Nov., 1898. S. Sentinel, 16 Jan., 1895. PRO HO, B26610, letter from NSTLC to Home Secretary, 25 April, 1898. The Labour Party Annual Reports, 1903. S. Advertiser, 14 July, 1906.

95. S. Advertiser, 12 May, 1906, p.5 and 11 May, 1907. P. Gazette, 1 July, 1910, p.803.

96. S. Advertiser, 11 May, 1907; 17 Feb., 1906; 19 Dec., 1908; 2 Feb. & 11 May, 1907 and 16 March, 1907. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1918, p.882.



the Distress Committees and Poor Law Authorities produced bitter resentment towards local and national government and engendered a class antagonism within the workers of the Potteries in a way which no other issue could. In October 1908 potters demonstrated against unemployment when speakers 'staked their lives on the demand that there must be food'. In 1909 the unions and labour organisations fed 16,000 destitute children in Longton alone. It was the combination of cyclical and technological unemployment that led the NAS and other unions to ally with the SDF on the Central Right to Work Committee. The potters played a leading role in the agitation with Jabez Booth for example at the head of the demonstration outside Burslem and Wolstanton Board of Guardians meeting in February 1909.<sup>97</sup>

Whilst the trades council raised the level of class consciousness among the labour movement of the Potteries the political expression of that consciousness was as disparate as the membership. A continual refrain within the council's rhetoric was the call for 'the overthrow of capitalism and its replacement by a co-operative Commonwealth'. Sam Clowes hoped that 'the potters in the future would run the potteries'.<sup>98</sup> For the potters this was an especially daunting task since their experiments in co-operative production had failed badly in the late 1890s. Over the immediate issues which the council addressed, its solutions and policies were essentially reformist. In the short term, pressure by labour was to lead to government intervention on specific issues.<sup>99</sup> For some local

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97. S. Advertiser, 17 Feb., 1906; 3 Feb., 1907; 28 March, 11 April, 9 May & 3 Oct., 1908; 16 Jan. & 6 Feb., 1909.

98. Op.cit., 11 May, 1907; 16 Jan. & 17 July, 1909 and 14 Sept., 1907; 15 Dec., 1906 and 11 April, 1908.

99. Op.cit., 14 Dec., 1907. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1907, p.1434 & 1 Sept., 1916, p.1066.

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unions the national Labour Party was the best vehicle for reform: others still objected violently to what they called the 'extreme socialism' of Snowden and MacDonald. The dichotomy remained between long term idealism and the expediency of the short term throughout the period and beyond.<sup>100</sup>

The pottery workers' relations with national labour organisations also contained conflicting elements. The potters were periodically associated with many of the main unions of the period. The potters and other national unions helped each other during disputes and campaigns. The potters' union certainly became aware of a wider labour consciousness.<sup>101</sup> For example, they gave financial assistance to the railway workers in 1911, the Dublin strikers of 1913, the policemen's action of 1919 and protested vigorously at the sentence of penal servitude given to McClean in Glasgow in 1916. National unions gave aid in return. During the 1907 sanitary strike, 18 societies gave grants to the NAS.<sup>102</sup>

The Women's Trade Union League did a great deal to develop the reformist thinking and strategies of the potters' union. During the campaigns over government regulation of lead use in pottery manufacture the potters' leaders were clearly impressed with the technical knowledge of the legislation process displayed by Gertrude Tuckwell and Lady Dilke, leading Parkes and Clowes to emulate their techniques. The WTUL were invaluable to the potters in the organising of women and their political lobbying of the radical MPs (to whom Tuckwell and Dilke were related)

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100. S. Advertiser, 17 July, 1909.

101. For example see the national unions and trades councils which assisted the potters' lead campaign, PRO, H045/9933. B26610 letters from Amalgamated Felt Hat Trimmers, 10 May, 1898 and Aberdeen and Bolton Trades Council to the Home Office.

102. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, p.29; NEC Mins, 15 April, 1916. TUC Report 1911, p.131. NEC mins, 25 Oct. 1919. Financial C<sup>ee</sup>, 1907, 7-21 May, NEC mins, 25 Oct., 1919. 16 Nov., 1917, Emergency C<sup>ee</sup> and Finance C<sup>ee</sup>, 1 Mar., 1917.

for the union but their aversion to 'class politics' served to reinforce the adherence of some potters to liberalism and inhibited their move towards the Labour Party. As one of the WTUL reports stated: 'we are dwelling on this earth, and are trying to make it less earthy, instead of devoting our energies to rhapsodising about heaven'.<sup>103</sup> The potters' relationship with the TUC confirms the union's gradualism and its membership's increasing desire for independent political representation. The motions put by the union to congress, after being debated at the annual delegation are predominantly reformist. It was after the pressure within the union for more democratic organisation in 1913-15 that led to union motions to Congress in 1917 objecting to it 'taking the necessary steps to concentrate and co-ordinate political action through the TUC only'.<sup>104</sup>

The international labour links of the potters were never as strong as, for example, those of the Welsh miners.<sup>105</sup> However, the potters' union does seem to have maintained a continuous solidarity with potters in other countries. The sanitary and hollow ware pressers were in contact with German pottery workers over trade intelligence in the 1900s, lending financial support to the 4,000 strikers there in 1907 and 1908. The

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103. WTUL, Quarterly Report, 24 Jan., 1900, p.24 & 39; October, 1903, p.2, Jan., 1904, p.37. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1911, p.1246. Parkin, 'Autobiography of a Trade Unionist', p.xiii. See also, R. Jacoby, 'Feminism and class consciousness in the British and American Women's Trade Union Leagues, 1890-1925', in B.A. Carroll (ed.), Liberating Women's History, pp. 138-146.

104. S. Clowes Scrapbook, 27 Mar., 1907. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, 1918, pp. 81 & 84. NEC mins, 8 June & 14 July, 1917 and 13 April, 1918. See also Clegg, Fox and Thompson, History of British Trade Unions, pp. 366-371. Cole, History of the British Working Class Movement, p.169ff. For the conservative, cautious advice and influence of the General Federation of Trade Unions on the early years of the potters' union see S. Clowes scrapbook, 21 Mar. & 2 April, 1907. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1908, p.472. Phelps-Brown, Growth of British Industrial Relations, p.xxv.

105. Francis and Smith, The Fed, p.28.

National Brotherhood of Potters in the United States co-operated throughout the period over, for example, the movement of blackleg labour and relative wage and price levels. Friendship with French and Dutch potters went back to the mid 19th century.<sup>106</sup> It was the Potters' International which had the greatest impact on the union. The Staffordshire potters used the standards and methods of obtaining legislative protection used by foreign potters' unions. In 1906 Sam Clowes, after attending the Limoges conference, seems to have been even more convinced of the need for a wider unity of workers and the experience clearly affected his stance on the trades and labour council. The 1912 gathering of the International was in Hanley and gave a helpful boost to the growing Potteries labour movement as it unanimously carried resolutions linking the potters' opposition to capitalism and militarism.<sup>107</sup>

The combined effect of the potters' own industrial experience in the 1900s and their relations with other labour groups, together with the growth of a local labour movement placed immense strains on the potters' remaining ties with the liberals.<sup>108</sup> The Liberals' 'Social Radicalism' and 'Progressivism' of the 1890s and 1900s was found by the potters to be seriously wanting in terms of hard issues. Their reforms were seen as

106. CATU COLL, Fin. ledgers Vol. I, pp. 2a & 6a. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1906, p.701 and 1 Jan., 1908, p.93. S. Advertizer, 14 Dec., 1907. Annual Delegation, 1927, p.137. NEC mins., 25 Oct., 1919, 16 Aug. and 16 Dec., 1920. L172 for the National Brotherhood of Operative Potters, Local no. 78, 23 Dec., 1913. L431, NBOP local No. 45, 15 June, 1914.

107. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., p.938 and 1 Oct., 1906, p.1141; 1 Oct., 1909, p.1169. In 1912 the International Federation of Pottery Workers had 36,050 members covering France, Germany, Italy, Austria and Denmark. The Times, 27 Aug., p.4 and 28 Aug., p.6, 1912. Annual Delegation, 1914 pp. 44-45.

108. For similar strains on other local lib-lab alliances in this period see H.V. Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, 1892-1914 (Cambridge, 1973) passim and p.285. Daunton, Coal Metropolis, pp. 178ff and 202. Burgess, Challenge of Labour, pp. 96, 102 and 133. Laybourn and Reynolds, 'Emergence of the Independent Labour Party in Bradford', p.335. Barker, 'Anatomy of reformism. The social and political ideas of the Labour leadership in Yorkshire', p.4ff.

piecemeal and based on self help with only limited state assistance. The basic failure of reforms, such as old age pensions, to seriously tackle social problems led to the final break by labour in the Potteries. Initially, in the early 1900s the alliance of liberals and labour looked sound.<sup>109</sup> After the help of Edwards and Ward over workmen's compensation, the trades disputes bill and the campaigns concerning industrial disease the potters and the labour council 'pledged to do all in its power to return them in 1906'. E. Edwards in return was quick to 'acknowledge the great force of labour which had placed them in power'. In its initial phase, the labour council thought the liberal government 'the most aggressive this country had ever known'. The action of the local Progressives and Young Liberal League continued to attract many traditional labour supporters of liberalism.<sup>110</sup>

The final break with the liberals for labour came over the basic inadequacy of the liberal reforms in the face of the economic and social problems of the Potteries. By May 1908 Joseph Lovatt was declaring his 'dissatisfaction with the present industrial system' and that he 'viewed with disfavour the Government's indifference to the claims of the unemployed'. The rationale of an industrial system which brought workers 'face to face with starvation' and the party which allowed it were anathema to local labour organisations.<sup>111</sup> Liberals in the Potteries saw the by-election defeat of 1909 as the result of unemployment. By

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109. S. Advertiser, 13 & 20 Jan; 23 June; 14 July & 15 Dec., 1906 and 7 Dec., 1907.

110. *Op.cit.*, 23 June, 1906, 25 Jan., p.5; 14 March, p.7, 1908 and 20 March, 25 Sept., 1909.

111. *Op.cit.*, 9 & 16 May, 1908.

contrast it was unemployment as the exemplar of the inadequacies of the Liberal programme around which the labour movement could unite. At a public meeting on the question in 1909 Jabez Booth spoke first. Sydney Malkin, one of the local Liberal leaders, should have followed but Booth's speech had revealed the distance which had opened up between their parties. Malkin refused to speak on the same platform as 'socialists speaking socialism'.<sup>112</sup> The liberals themselves became deeply divided. There was considerable debate therefore over Enoch Edwards in 1909 since as they put it, he 'now takes the labour pledge' and he had criticised the party for 'moving too slowly on unemployment'.<sup>113</sup> Unemployment diminished after 1909 but the decade had shown to labour the narrow limits of the Liberals' so-called 'social radicalism'.

The rise of a separate political party for labour to match the strength of the other local parties took time and faced many difficulties. Besides the retarding effects of employer construction of values and codes of behaviour the fragmentation of the potters industrially and socially slowed the development of labour's own political presence before the war. The practical problems involved in creating local organisations in the context of high unemployment during the 1900s were considerable. As the labour Committee put it in 1908: it was 'only fighting to hold the seats they have'.<sup>114</sup> The potters' union had to accept that the lib-lab incumbents of the parliamentary seats would have to remain until the potters' own candidates could be found and most of all financed. The

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112. Op.cit., 3 Oct., 19 Dec., 1908 and 16, 23 and 30 Jan., 1909.

113. Op.cit., 30 Oct., 1909.

114. See also Emy, Liberals, Radicals and Social Politics, p.287. A. Clinton, The Trade Union Rank and File, p.2. S. Advertiser, 3 Nov., 1906; 17 October, 1908.

progress of a Potteries labour party therefore proceeded in staccato fashion. The loose coalition of labour organisations which came together in the early 1900s over unemployment and related social issues finally formed the Hanley Labour Representation Committee in July 1906, with Joseph Lovatt as chairman. The committee's primary object was 'to secure labour representation in all local governing bodies and Parliament'. A committee covering the Potteries appeared in November 1907. Although leading members of the potters' union were highly active in the local labour organisation the union in general took some time to develop a common policy. The union was still debating the merits of individual affiliation to the national Labour Party in 1911. It was the recent legal decisions on trade unions and in particular those which made it 'illegal for trade unions' funds to be used for the purpose of Labour representation' which finally led the union to affiliate in 1912. Only in 1914 did the local coalition of labour organisations change its name to the North Staffordshire Labour Party.<sup>115</sup>

The affiliation of the Staffordshire miners' union to the national Labour Party in 1908 was important for the timing of the local labour group's growth. It came just as the Hanley and North Staffordshire Labour Representation Committees had fought their first election under 'the united forces of the Labour party'. According to William Wayte one of the joint committee's leaders, 'the miners had given their votes for labour', and so labour's opponents would now 'shake in their shoes'.<sup>116</sup>

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115. Op.cit., July 14, 1906 and 14 Sept., 1907. Annual Delegation, 1911, p.11. Labour Party Annual Reports, 1912, p.45 and 1914, p.69. Cf. Barker, 'Anatomy of reformism', pp. 11-12, 23-35. Laybourn and Reynolds, 'Emergence of the Independent Labour Party', pp. 319 and 340. Cole, Organised Labour, p.107 and History of the British Working Class Movement, p.41.

116. S. Advertiser, 30 Oct., 1909.

The potters' union regularly backed members in local elections and contributed strongly to the parliamentary campaigns but it was not until the growth of union financial membership between 1916-1918 that enabled it to consider financing its own parliamentary candidate. The pressure from the rank and file members grew as they saw the marked growth in their own political fund.<sup>117</sup> Individuals played significant roles in labour's growth. At the parliamentary level it is arguable that the potters did not have a figure sufficiently well-known throughout the Potteries to replace William Owen. They had to wait until Lovatt and Clowes had spent over a decade building union structures and party bases among the Six Towns. In the wards it took a similar amount of time for Hollins and Aucock in Stoke, Coxon and Tunncliffe in Longton and Booth in Burslem to build their reputations and credibility in both the union and the nascent labour party.<sup>118</sup>

After the initial formation and growth of the local labour party progress was slow until the experience of the war period led to a reformation of labour. Labour leaders in the Potteries, especially those from the potters, had their public reputations greatly enhanced by their work on the 'joint regulation' committees. The anticipation of far reaching national reforms forced the unions and labour party to act on the key issues involved in the reconstruction debate. In 1918 the potters' union renewed and increased its efforts to win both municipal and parliamentary representation, with great success.<sup>119</sup> Small groups

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117. CATU COLL, NEC mins, 12 Jan., 1918 and 17 July, 1920. P. Gazette, 1 Aug., 1920, p.1077.

118. P. Gazette, 1 Nov., 1910, p.1273; 1 June, 1911, p.697 and 1913, p. 206. CATU COLL, NEC mins, 25 Oct., 1919. F. Parkin, 'Autobiography of a Trade Unionist, p. xviii.

119. P. Gazette, 1 May, 1917, p.603; 1 June, 1918, p.485 and 1 Dec., 1918, p.1355. The committees were composed of unionists and employers who administered the temporary exchange of labour between firms during the war.



of potters in Scotland, Liverpool and Derbyshire who were participating in the growth of their local labour parties pressed for similar concerted action by the NAS. The levels of union and class consciousness among the potters were clearly raised at this time and sought political expression. However, the forms of political action which emerged were completely in line with the essentially gradualist path of legislative reform which the Potters and most other labour leaders had advocated. Psychologically, the return of independent labour members was a huge goal and an immense achievement. The success in local elections and ultimately Clowes' election to parliament in 1924 seemed to justify the way the potters had moved forward on health and compensation legislation from 1900 and also how they had used the state apparatus during the war to win tangible benefits. Political action was to be pragmatic and realistic as this resolution of the Annual Delegation in 1918 showed. It read:

Municipal labour representation is as important as Parliamentary, as many Acts of Parliament are only permissible and may or may not be put into operation by Municipal Councils. It is therefore imperative that the labour groups should be strong enough to enforce the adoption of such of these acts as are beneficial to the workers and the community generally. <sup>120</sup>

Finally, the industry's relations with the state had continuous and often subtle effects on the potters' attitudes, values and actions. The potters were affected directly by government legislation which concerned the pottery industry and indirectly by the activities of the state or its agents. In terms of direct intervention by the government the potters' campaign in the early 1890s for an inquiry into the dangers of pottery

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120. Op.cit., 1 Nov., 1918, p.882 and 1 Dec., 1924, p.2022. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, 1918, pp. 84-85.

manufacture set off a succession of government reports and new regulations for the industry in 1899, 1914 and 1928. In the 1890s the apparent ability to move the government to implement protective legislation provided one of the main bonds between the liberals and labour in the Potteries.<sup>121</sup> However, the persistent and public opposition of pottery owners, through the 1890s and into the 1900-1914 period, against employer responsibility for industrial disease and their objections to state intervention was of great significance. The owners' obstructive positions helped to dent their paternalist image.<sup>122</sup> The Hanley Lead Reform Committee was able to focus clearly on employer pursuit of profit at the expense of labour's health as the main cause of industrial illness. While the campaigns led to periodic increases in class antagonism the logic contained within the legislative, reforming action was based on an acceptance of capitalist society: remedial state assistance was not intended to lead to a radical restructuring of society or the economic and social relations which allowed industrial disease to exist.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, many workers actively opposed state intervention of any kind, since they associated official regulations with unemployment and interference with basic worker control and discretion. As a result some potters were alienated from their union and its political allies as much as from their employers. W. Milner, a dipper

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121. Whipp, 'Women Workers of North Staffordshire', pp. 116-119. J. Burns, Hansard, 13 Dec., 1900, col. 1477-1521. B. Wilson, Young Oxford, Vol. II, No. 15, Dec., 1900. T.E. Thorpe & T. Oliver, Lead Compounds in Pottery. Report to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, 1899. HMI Factories Report, 1913, p.48. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, 1928, p.2.

122. Hansard, 1907, col. 947 and 1912, col. 474. Samuel Report, Q. 6920 ff. CATU COLL, 17 Oct., 1927.

123. B. Wilson, Young Oxford, in loc.cit., pp. 127-130. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation, 1921, pp. 106, 107 & 121; 1922, p.113 and 1923, pp. 119-120.

at Barker and Kent's, told a meeting on the new regulations of 1901, 'don't let the bread be taken out of your mouths by agitatory'.<sup>124</sup>

Conversely, while debates over the question of health legislation heightened certain differences between employers and workers, other problems which faced the industry subsumed these differences. The questions of cheap foreign imports, trade marks and freight rates were presented by manufacturers in terms of unified local industrial interest in opposition to government policy. The rationale behind the distribution of the profits, which the duties and trade marks were designed to protect, was not mentioned.<sup>125</sup> Government action in key instances helped develop industrial unity between employers and employed. The Munitions Act provisions of 1916 led the union and the manufacturers' federation to protest jointly to the Board of Trade. Owners and workers collaborated over government contracts for electrical ware going abroad. The language used was hardly that of the class war when potters referred to the problem 'which is in front of us, both employers and employed'. Admittedly the action of government during the war period did lead to tension between the classes in the Potteries. Potters called for 'the conscription of wealth' as well as labour and opposed public subscription to supplement the naval and military pensions.<sup>126</sup> The potters' experience of direct government legislation was therefore contrary to the view which identifies increased state action with the generation of class conflict: the range of responses were too diverse for that ever to be the case.<sup>127</sup>

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124. HMI Factories Report, 1907, p.52; 1909, p.46 & 1919, p.219. S. Sentinel, 28 Feb., 1901.

125. CATU COLL, NEC mins, 19 Sept. 1916. L41 and L42, letters from the War Office 23 & 26 Oct., 1915. L577 Mr. Bailey of Doulton's to S.Clowes, 10 July, 1922 and L578 Bullers to Clowes 22 June, 1922.

126. CATU COLL, NEC mins, 10 & 17 May. P. Gazette, 1917, p.603.

127. Burgess, Challenge of Labour, pp. 168-170.

The state also affected pottery in an indirect way via national legislation and the action of government departments and agents. With regard to industrial relations and the pottery industry the government was conspicuous for its lack of direct involvement. The potters' union was alarmed by the Taff Vale case yet as Askwith admitted, the government during the period lacked any coherent policy on industrial relations.<sup>128</sup> The supply of a number of arbitrators and conciliators may have assisted the spread of industry-wide collective bargaining as did the work of Dr. Addison on helping to establish the National Council of the Pottery Industry. Certainly the joint lobbying of government departments by the employers' and workers' representatives on the Council must have blurred the forces of opposition and conflict which the disputes of 1916-1924 had generated. The union executive were caught between their attempt to use the Council to construct uniform and minimum standards in the industry and the need to ally with employers to press for government action to make such standard legal requirements.<sup>129</sup>

The necessary contact of the potters with other agents of the state could both strengthen and dilute the areas of conflict which arose between worker and master in the workplace. The factory inspectorate were popular with some working potters for the practical help they offered. Hilda Martindale found that many 'welcomed my visits to the works and to their homes as if I were a friend'. The inspectorate's liberal

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128. G. Askwith, Industrial Problems and Disputes (1920) passim. Clegg, System of Industrial Relations, p.289.

129. Labour Gazette, 1903, p.95. CATU COLL, NEC mins, 30 May, 1920. National Council of the Pottery Industry (reprinted from S. Sentinel) 15 Jan., 1918, p.3. NCP mins, 1921, p.290.

individualism was concerned with social welfare, never militancy. Miss Vines, the local inspectress in 1907, still spoke of the duties of the rich towards the poor in her model of social harmony.<sup>130</sup> The co-opting of potters' leaders such as Clowes and Hollins on to government inquiries or advisory committees to the Board of Trade and Ministry of Labour further strengthened the involvement of the potters in consultative and legislative process and provided potent images of the system's acceptability to working potters.<sup>131</sup>

Yet these features of the potters' relations with the state must be set against the episodes which produced antipathy and conflict. In 1910 anger was intense after the union failed to persuade the Admiralty, (who had placed an order with the company) to intervene with Furnivals when the company employed three times the apprentices allowed by custom and refused to recognise the potters' society.<sup>132</sup> Similarly the law was openly discredited in potters' eyes by the use made of the courts by employers. The case in 1892 when Meakins charged a group of his striking workers with conspiracy remained in the minds of potters for a long time afterwards. Pottery owners' opposition to the Trade Disputes Bill of 1906 and their backing of the Taff Vale decision increased the enmity of workers and employers during the conflict of the 1900s. This feeling was increased when pottery workers took manufacturers to court in order to recover compensation for 'dismissal without notice' and failed as in the notorious Briscoe versus Meakins case in 1896.<sup>133</sup>

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130. H. Martindale, From One Generation to Another (1944) p.86. HMI Factories Report, 1907, p.144. S. Advertiser, 11 Jan., 1908.

131. NCPI mins, 22 Sept., 1921 and 14 Jan., 1925. Profiteering Acts 1919 and 1920, Central C<sup>ee</sup> Report on Pottery (1921) p.1.

132. CATU COLL, L619, Director of Navy Contracts to NSPW, 10 Sept., 1910 & L623, J. Lovatt to Furnivals, 19 Aug. 1910. NEC mins 31 Aug. 1916.

133. S. Advertiser, 12 April, 1892. F. Benham to Royal Commission on Trade Disputes, 1906, Q.4979-4980. P. Gazette, 1 June, 1914, p.701. CATU COLL, L694 A. Mellor's prosecution of the union for 'damages for loss of trade' for calling his workers out on strike. Cf. Hunt, British Labour History, p.311ff. Clegg, Industrial Relations, p.294. Price, Labour, the Labour process, and the dynamics of labour history, p.13.

The increasing concern of the state with industrial life and the consequent closer involvement of labour with the machinery of government did not lead to any clear conception by labour of workers and the state's separate interests. Although legislation and the activity of representatives of the state might engender conflict between capital and labour, master and worker, both developed their own interpretations of government action. On certain issues during the 1890s and 1900s they reached quite opposite conclusions which contributed to the growth of not only the potters' union but the local labour movement. On certain broad issues which appeared to effect the interests of employer and worker it seemed sensible for them to co-operate. Problems such as health and the government's protective legal requirements could produce diverging reactions placing potters at odds with employer and union.

### Conclusion

The potters and their union were deeply affected by the community they lived in, the influence of the labour movement of which they were a part, and the actions of a state and political system they sought to use and reform. Not only were the social relations of the community, and the neighbourhood especially, of direct relevance to the potters' work, they also helped to form a wider social foundation for the union. These relations were of great value during disputes and periods of unemployment. It was from the social relations of the community that the distinctive class awareness of the potters grew. The codes and values of the community mediated the relations between employer and employed. Manufacturers saw themselves and to a large extent were recognised as local leaders and figures of authority and trust, an image which they naturally exploited in industrial conflict and political debate.

The pottery workers neither uniformly accepted nor endorsed the owners' attempts to construct dominant values and codes of behaviour. The potters erected their own ideologies from their own experience, an experience that was clearly coloured by the actions of manufacturers, but never overwhelmed by their authority. The key impulse behind the potters' attempts to create their own institutions and associations, separate from employers, was the desire for independence and respectability. The intention may have been driven by an acute sense of class differentiation but the perception of those differences was reduced by the activities of many workers and unionists. In order to make an impact on the official public life of the Six Towns working class representatives of all kinds had to demonstrate their competence according to the prevailing rules which at first they did not control. The alliances made by the potters with other local groups and individuals also moderated their sense of class opposition.

Given the influence of the social relations within the community on the potters' class consciousness the conflict and struggle resulting from the workplace was never easily politicised. Nor was it a stable basis for the growth of an industrial or political labour movement. Traditional employer and worker allegiance to liberalism remained strong. Social and religious divisions within the workforce of the Potteries were matched by their unions' differences over industrial and political questions: both retarded the local labour movement's strength and development. It took the experience of widespread and sustained unemployment in the 1900s and the partial discrediting of employer paternalism, together with the manifest failure of the response by the Liberal administration, to finally compel the main unions to form their separate political party. The rhetoric and ideology of the new Labour

Party appeared radical and in some cases revolutionary. In practice its political activity and immediate reformist programme was the result of: the constraints imposed by previous political strategies and the start up costs of political organisation; the available models of action offered by their political and industrial allies and the diverging reactions of the Potteries to the issues of the period.



### Conclusion

In order to understand the forms of work and trade unionism in the pottery industry between 1900-1924 an analytical framework composed of five main elements has been used. This involved an examination of the influence of the industrial structure, the details of how work was experienced and organised; the form and function of unionism; the relations between workers and employers and an initial exploration of the relationship between the potters, their community, the labour movement and the state. Throughout the analysis there has been an interplay between the internal and external contexts of work and trade unionism. The internal sphere was made up of the worlds of the workshop, the potbank and the union: on the outside was the general organisation of the industry, the industrial relations system, the local culture and a wide range of extraneous influences.

An essential part of explaining the development of work and trade unionism lies in a recognition of how these two contexts interacted. We therefore tried to show how the structural features of the industry and area influenced the potters' toil and their forms of combination and how in experiencing and reacting to these influences potters modified and revised those broader features. For example, while the general characteristics of ceramic technology might determine certain dimensions of work, individually or collectively, workers were able to manipulate machinery in the light of their own technical knowledge and skill, and thereby determine important elements of their work. Similarly, with trade unionism; changes in product and labour markets or managerial action may have set certain preconditions for union growth, but it was the workers' own interpretation of union membership or action and their relevance which finally decided the changes in union participation.

There are a number of conclusions which deserve highlighting.

Three broad themes developed within the study. Firstly, the analytical framework revealed a wide range of forces which generated the manifold divisions within the potters seen as a workforce, a union or a community. The experience of work diverged widely, leading to differing conceptions of collective action and a rich mosaic of union form. The past history of pottery manufacture; the varieties of ceramic technology and the market configuration all contributed to the industries highly sub-divided structure, and the complex separations within the production process and divisions of labour. The social relations of the industry embodied these fundamental divisions. The pottery industry illustrates the argument that although the relationship of the owners of production to the direct producers may constitute the economic basis for the social structure that basis 'due to the innumerable different empirical circumstances' may exhibit 'infinite variations and gradations in appearance'.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the complex divisions continued to dominate the pottery industry throughout this period and beyond which runs counter to the recent assertions that the process of industrialisation was leading to an equalisation of such differences and to labour becoming progressively more homogenous.<sup>2</sup>

However, whilst the pottery industry was clearly divided internally in its structure and social relations, this fragmentation was not entirely haphazard. There were patterns to this sectionalism. A

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1. M. Jones, 'Class and Society in 19th Century Gwynedd', in D. Smith (ed.), A People and a Proletariat (1980) p.209.

2. Reich, Gordon and Edwards, 'A Theory of labour market segmentation', American Econ. Review, Vol. 63, No. 2, May 1973, pp. 359-365.

tension existed between the general forces which divided the industry and the forms of association between potters. Bases for cohesion and solidarity did exist within the workforce. Yet these bases were of necessity essentially small-scale and localised. Unity and strength of association developed spontaneously within the workshop and around the workgroup, as well as along the lines of family ties and kin relations which linked home and work. Similarly within the potters' union (both before and after amalgamation) it was the occupational group within your department of the potbank or local area where your immediate loyalty lay, where the meaning of union membership became clear and where most of your activity as unionist occurred. As Foster showed in his study of 19th century industrial life, sub-grouping was of vital importance. The workgroup, often family based, as a sub-group inside the potbank or union provided a way of accommodating the divisions and uncertainty of the work and its attendant social relations. Those groupings protected people from irrelevance and provided the essential social fabric of work and trade unionism.<sup>3</sup> Larger groupings and associations were created but they were less permanent or stable. The occupational group across the industry was not the natural or common base for organisation. The industry-wide strike required exceptional circumstances to bring it about and was an uncommon occurrence.

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3. J. Foster, 'Nineteenth Century Towns: A Class Dimension' in Flinn and Smout (eds.), Essays in Social History, pp. 179-188. For the importance of the workgroup to the pottery industry today see L. Brown, 'The political economy of the potbank', mimeo L.S.E. 1982.

The second main theme and the key to uncovering the historical experience of workers was found to lie in the use of perspective. The crucial distinction arose between the formal and the informal focus: using both produced a more satisfying explanation of the major events, and general developments of the period. The perspective enables one to penetrate beyond the surface characteristics of trade unionism especially. John Benson saw that in general:

Labour history has been less hagiographic and less narrowly institutional in recent years; slowly the history of labour is being rewritten from the standpoint of the rank and file workers rather than from the vantage of the union head office. 4

This study of the potters' union has attempted to combine the formal and informal focus; looking at the actions of the membership and leadership. To some observers, for example, the union remained essentially a craft union, but by examining the composition of the membership and the union's organisation and action at all levels, the union clearly had developed into a more widely representative industrial union by the First World War.

The traditional and received views on the industry may be sharply revised by analysing work and unionism at the informal levels. The main statements on the supposedly peaceful industrial relations of pottery manufacture<sup>5</sup> have concentrated on the official, industry-wide level: by looking at the shopfloor level of experience an entirely

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4. J. Benson, British Coalminers in the Nineteenth Century. A Social History (Dublin 1980) pp. 214-215.

5. Williams in The Structure of British Industry in loc. cit. R. Charles, The Development of Industrial Relations in Britain 1911-1939. Studies in the Evolution of Collective Bargaining at National and Industry Level (1973) p.135.

opposite conclusion may be drawn. As Samuel showed, while publically conflict over technological change and its impact on labour may have temporarily ceased, in the workplace the subject was still being fought. Whilst the Pottery Gazette and certain employers had accepted casting as inevitable in 1911, on the potbanks workers were still contesting the issue to the end of the period.<sup>6</sup> Official agreements for 1900 and 1911 declared that 5% wage increases would be awarded in earthenware. Evidence from workers in 1920 indicated how these agreements were never easily translated into the reality in the workshop. For labour history, the informal perspective has also opened up areas of working life which have hitherto remained the preserve of other specialist historians. In particular, the role of women workers is greatly enhanced by studying them in the relevant social setting of the home, family and work.

Although a fixed period of time has been studied it has pointed up the simultaneous existence of continuities and discontinuities within the Potteries' history as a third main theme. An analysis of the pottery industry must be anchored on the largely unchanging characteristics of its mixed composition, the continuing fragmentation of the production process and workforce, and the traditional emphases within worker and managerial strategy. However, by identifying the underlying features of the industry and dominant attitudes of those who worked there, the decisive transformations of the early 20th century became apparent. The period can now be seen as one of major change.

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6. R. Samuel, 'Workshop of the World', History Workshop, No. 3, Spring 1977, p.11. P. Gazette, 1 Sept., 1911, pp. 1016 and 1033.

To those involved, and with the aid of hindsight, the First World War clearly qualifies as a significant episode which radically altered the industry in both the short and long term. Potters thought the war produced 'extraordinary and altogether abnormal circumstances'<sup>7</sup> for the industry. Official union membership, given the rising wages and prices and manufacturer recognition, rose to mass proportions for the first time. Union density never again fell back to the levels of the 19th century.<sup>8</sup> The amalgamation of both manufacturers' and workers' organisations proved decisive. An industry-wide collective bargaining forum was created. Although we have noted the range of bargaining forms beneath the national level, from 1915 onwards it proved to be a continuing reference point for union and employer negotiations in the future. The period also witnessed not only a shift in the potters' consciousness from 19th century craft sectionalism to a 20th century industrial unionism but also a move away from the political allegiances which had been built on craft individualism. Technological changes, widespread unemployment and industrial conflict, along with the appearance of a new union leadership informed the establishment and growth of the first independent political presence by Labour.

Work and trade unionism in the pottery industry is best understood from the related contexts from which they emerged. The industrial structure is an important starting point. Many of the features of work in the potbanks were directly related to the industry's past development. Its 19th century growth led to a highly diversified

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7. P. Gazette, 1 April, 1919, p.393.

8. G. Bain and R. Price, Profiles of Union Growth, p.57.

industry and a mixture of company form. The centrality of craft skill, the density of work custom and the piecework system were all major aspects of pottery work which were deeply embedded in the past. The depth of their embeddedness meant they had a vital conditioning effect on workers' and management's actions during the changed circumstances of the early 20th century. The way the striking sanitary workers in 1907 called William Owen out of retirement to consult him on the question of customary strike notice is an example of Marx's observation that 'men may make their own history' but they do so 'under circumstances directly given and transmitted from the past'. Therefore the pottery industry remained 'a group of trades' with differences between the sub-industries leading to widely contrasting methods of work which always made industry-wide union organisation and bargaining difficult.<sup>9</sup> Industrial performance between 1900-1924 provided a key explanation for the experience and action of the potters as differing sectors underwent often totally dissimilar changes in output and employment and operated in quite different economic climates.

While some historians still consider the workplace in the past to be a 'hidden world' or 'terra incognita', it is only from a study of the potbank that a reconstruction of work experience and its relation to trade unionism can be built.<sup>10</sup> The potters' work experience and their social relations resulted from an interaction between the potters' own attitudes to work and the technological and organisational features of the industry. The analysis of pottery work revealed the small workshop

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9. S. Clowes scrapbook, 15 April, 1907. B.A. Whitelegge, 1910 Lead C<sup>ee</sup> Vol. 11, p.6. K. Marx, 'The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte' as quoted in Bendix, Work and Authority in Industry, p.115.

10. H. Francis, 'The Secret World of the South Wales Miner. The Relevance of Oral History' in D. Smith (ed.), op.cit., pp. 166-178. J. Cronin, Industrial Conflict in Modern Britain, p.93. See also, R. Price, Masters, Unions and Men, p.3.

within a potbank as the centre of the potter's experience of work and the workgroup as the main social unit. While relations within the shop and group were mainly cohesive, the relationship between workgroups, ordered hierarchically by skill and status were often highly competitive given the separation of the production process and the pressure generated by the piece-work system. Customs developed which intensified the differentiation as did the potbank's internal labour market. Pottery work certainly generated conflict between worker and master and therefore established a necessary precondition for union formation, but it also created contests and dissent between workers which made collective union organisation and action uncertain. It is against this sectionalism that the struggle to create and maintain an official industrial union in the pottery industry must be judged. At the same time it was the centrality of the workgroup to the potbank which ensured a strong foundation for the unofficial organisation and action of pottery workers.

The potters also show how work may be construed as a way of life: how the home, family and work were closely bound together. One of the distinctive features of pottery manufacture was the linking of work and domestic life given the physical concentration of the Six Towns, the lack of alternative employment and the necessary synchronisation of home and work routines. The main connecting link between these two worlds was the family, whereby family members worked individually or collectively in the industry. The family and kin relations were vital ingredients of the potter's work experience providing means of job entry and training as well as giving material and emotional sustenance both on and off the potbank. The continuing centrality of the family and home to the potter's work was also to become an important bridge between the workplace and union organisation.



The large number of female workers in the industry gave an opportunity to inspect the role of the woman worker. That the male potter enjoyed a large degree of traditional public authority within the workplace and the home was accepted, but the image of total male dominance was shown to be overdrawn. Women potters occupied strategic positions in both the home and workshop and they clearly influenced the shape of their own and their family's relationship between home and work. Women potters were often the central figures who joined the worlds of home and industry and especially in the families beset by the problems of ill-health. More local studies which recognise the role of women in industry in connexion with the home and family are necessary in order to test the often highly loaded contemporary views and judgements which have survived.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, while some aspects of the position of the woman worker, both at home and in work, could inhibit her ability to formally join a union, there were many ways in which women acted to defend their own interest. Women potters did combine with other workers, usually within their own immediate workgroup and workshop and were seen to dispute their conditions of employment and contest managerial decisions. The examples of the action taken by a group of Wedgwood's banders and liners over prices in 1923 or Hannah Smith's protest at Outram's in 1912 regarding union membership are indicative of a wealth of such daily, unexceptional activity by women potters which has gone unrecorded.<sup>12</sup>

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11. Cf. C. Dyehouse, 'Working Class Mothers and Infant Mortality in England 1895-1914', Journal of Social History, Fall 1978, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 248-267, for a reappraisal of contemporary middle class opinions on women workers and child care.

12. CATU COLL, L567, Wedgwood's banders and liners to A. Hollins, 20 Sept., 1923. L729, C.W. Outram & Co. to Agnes Lawton, union organiser, 16 June, 1924.

Health was a problem which overlay the worlds of home and work in an industry with a notoriously high incidence of lead poisoning and dust disease. Both forms of industrial disease, besides the physical disorders they produced, had the indirect effects of interrupting work, often leading to job loss and related poverty. Yet the experience of industrial disease did not produce opposition or conflict between worker and employer as Gersuny contends. In his study of health and work he argues that there was 'an endemic conflict of interest between the workers at risk in manual occupations and the employers'.<sup>13</sup> The potters' experience does not confirm his contention. Pottery workers rationales of work and health developed in response to their immediate needs and the customary values of home and workplace. Some workers saw ill-health as a necessary risk associated with a job, others even regarded that risk as a hallmark of their labour. Many workers deeply resented the cost to their health but had limited choice of alternative work and therefore were preoccupied with trying to maintain their home and family at all costs. There was no simple or direct relationship between the issue of ill-health and industrial conflict on which to build trade unionism. The issue even led to further divisions between potters over the appropriate action to be taken on the question.

The form and functions of the potters' union were not simply created by the traditionally dominant craft groups. Instead the union grew out of the special characteristics of the workforce and workplace. Clearly the official amalgamations of 1900-1906 and 1919 directly

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13. G. Gersuny, Work Hazards and Industrial Conflict (New England 1981) p.142.

involved the leaders of the main unions and even hinged on their personal relations; but in each case the pressures generated by technological change and the aspirations of rank and file groups for greater unity were the essential back-drop to the formal processes. The union's structure therefore developed from a combination of traditional practices and allegiances blended with the informal organisations of the potbank. That the union was able to include such a spread of organisational form was a measure of its representativeness and the reason for its continued growth. It therefore included the craft tested units of the annual delegation and lodge yet allied these with the trade, workshop committees and collectors system in order to cover such a variegated industry and workforce.

It is worth emphasising that although the Clowes, Lovatt and Hollins were clearly the architects of the union, its form and operation was not imposed from above. There was a continual counter-balance between the necessities of centralised direction and strength with the needs of autonomous action by the rank and file. While the union's structure might appear uniform and closely integrated, in practice its operation was flexible and allowed a large degree of independence. Within broad central guidelines the membership were active in creating their own versions of union membership and activity. The representative structure and the internal flexibility of the union also prevented any one group from establishing dominant power, even if the main craft groups remained the leading sections. At the lower levels especially the union was highly organic with leadership and officials performing an advisory, co-ordinating role even after the formal centralisation of the society between 1915 and 1918.

The informal perspective proved vital in determining the meaning of unionism to the potter. As Gutman has shown, non-membership did not always imply antipathy towards unionism. The boundaries between formal and informal participation have been shown to be very imprecise and there were many ways of supporting union action: non-financial membership or workers acting alongside full union members in disputes are just two variants.<sup>14</sup> This insight into unionism sheds a different light therefore on the official union membership figures which indicate a remarkable growth in union membership from 1914 especially. Under the conditions of rising wages and prices, a tightened labour market and manufacturer recognition, formal union membership increased dramatically as workers could now afford the subscription and risk carrying a card. Yet that should not lead us to suppose that workers were then acting in support of union objectives for the first time. During the 1900s many potters unable to pay full membership had nonetheless been involved in the disputes and unemployment agitation of those years.

The potters experience confirms that the workgroup constituted 'a major reference group for the formation of union attachment and the formation of membership needs.'<sup>15</sup> Indeed it was probably the strongest strand of the union's social fabric. Potters not only worked in groups

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14. H. Gutman, 'Local Behaviour and Patterns of Discontent' in Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America, pp. 297-304. It is interesting that in spite of the union's recurrent financial problems the union continued to allow workers to remain as associated 'non-financial members' or 'half-payment' members (paying a ½d a week) when a potter had 'no situation' (i.e. unemployed) or earned £1 or less. Attempts to change the practice were heavily defeated in 1913. CATU COLL, Annual Delegation mins, 1913, pp. 32-36 and 40. 1915, pp. 60-61. NEC mins, 20 Feb., 1915.

15. J. Child, R. Loveridge, M. Warner, 'Towards an organizational study of trade unions', Sociology, Vol. 7, 1973, p.75.

but commonly joined their union as part of workshop or occupational groupings. This was true for the skilled craftsman down to the less well known, unskilled workers. In the pottery industry the family supplied a complementary focus for union membership. As the collectors' experience and testimony showed it was the workgroup on the potbank or the family membership group which were crucial mediums for developing workers' attitudes and values towards trade unionism. The workgroup and the family union group were the primary means for women workers to participate in the union. Without the recognition which the leadership gave to the collectors system, the workshop groups or the interaction between the family, home and work, the union would have found it immensely difficult to move beyond its traditional craft basis.<sup>16</sup>

Management action had a major impact on the potters' work experience and the evolution of the NAS. From the continuing struggle for control of production a picture of industrial relations develops at variance with the orthodox views on the industry. Given the persistence of market changes, intense competition and the need to cut costs the period contained many episodes of disputes. Average plant size was relatively small since production relied on craft and manual skills. The dividing line between worker and master was not always sharply defined and the typical company was run as a private family firm. Yet these features

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16. Compare the use of an analysis of both the formal and informal aspects of trade unions presented here with the traditional emphasis on the formal by E. Wigham, Trade Unions (Oxford 1969) passim and see for example pp. 44, 46 and 90-93; J. Hughes and H. Pollins, Trade Unions in Great Britain (1973), passim and p.167. A. Hutt, British Trade Unionism (1962), especially pp. 34-84. N. Robertson and K. Sams, British Trade unionism, Vol. 1, Selected Documents (1972). For an acknowledgment of the importance of localised, small-scale union activity see J. Lovell, Stevedores and Dockers. A Study of Trade Unions in the Port of London 1870-1914 (1969) p.214ff.

did not make for the peaceful industrial relations often associated with this type of business. On the contrary the need to cut costs and maintain slim profit margins were for many smaller units the only means of survival leading to recurring conflict over the organisation and payment of work. Managerial forms of control of production and labour were essentially simple and direct but management also used a range of indirect means of influencing worker behaviour, including their own types of paternalism and welfare policies. Paternalist strategies clearly affected workers' attitudes to work and trade unionism: but the bases of paternalist relations were fragile, requiring constant maintenance and were liable to instant collapse in the face of the deeper cleavages between management and workers which the production process revealed.<sup>17</sup>

In view of management strategy and the contest for control of work on the potbank the industrial relations of the pottery industry can be shown to have been neither simple nor peaceful as some authors suggest. Bargaining was as complex as might be expected from the industry's structure, division of labour, payment systems and the range of company form. The most common level for bargaining was between the workgroup or occupational group and individual management not on the industry-wide scale. This local setting for industrial relations was entirely consistent with managerial strategy and the basic organisation of work. Union action both grew from and reinforced these forms of bargaining

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17. Cf. H. Dutton and J. King, 'The limits of paternalism: the cotton tyrants of North Lancashire, 1836-54', Social History, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1981, pp. 72-73.

and thereby enhanced the sectionalism and separatism within the industry and workforce. Even the apparently detailed, codified agreements between union and management covering the industry during and after the First World War were only distantly related to the dense undergrowth of potbank or area bargaining. Leaders of the NAS and manufacturers' federation were generally in favour of wider, official structures but they could not ensure their success, as sectional, informal action by both masters and workers continued throughout the period. Formal, national agreements could never easily contain and control the wealth of shopfloor activity. At best they presented general models and standards which were only partially recognised as the instability and ineffectiveness of the Board of Arbitration and National Council show. Moreover, by taking a differentiated view of conflict; by paying attention to the range of bargaining arenas and the contests over the control of work which developed in the potbank; and finally by setting them against the rhythms of economic change, a rich diversity of industrial disputes and conflict was revealed.

Finally, it became clear that the potters and their union operated within a wider social setting and that the experience of work was related to events outside the potbank. The social relations and codes of behaviour derived from the neighbourhood and the strength of localism within the Six Towns helped to explain not only how potters organised their lives around work and home but how the union came to express these qualities of the community. The potters' varied experience of work and the divisions within the industry and the Six Towns did not make for a unified union or class consciousness. The actions of employers within

the community compounded the sectional consciousness of the potters. Owners attempted to define and legitimate bonds of common interest between master and worker via charity or welfare provision and their roles in local institutions, as a means of containing issues which might lead to conflict. This was especially so with regard to questions which could be presented as affecting the industry of the 'administration' of the Potteries in a unitary rather than a political sense. Although the potters were influenced by such widespread manufacturer activity outside the workplace, they were by no means overwhelmed by these displays. As potters sought to establish their own independent social and political institutions they do seem to have been indirectly affected by the dominant codes and values of the Potteries. In doing so potters were also drawn into alliances and relationships, locally and nationally, which served to blur their sense of class opposition and struggle.<sup>18</sup>

The development of the Potteries labour movement and political party especially, was therefore an uneven process which embodied the manifold divisions of interest and ideology which the potters' community contained. It was not that the potters were an essentially non-militant workforce as Rolph assumes,<sup>19</sup> rather that the difficulties of politicising the issues of conflict were formidable. The struggle of the local trades council and related political groups to construct an independent political party for Labour was confronted by not only

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18. For the tension between the development of class consciousness within trade unions and the dominant codes of behaviour based on 'respectability and responsibility' see W. Hamish Fraser, Trade Unions and Society: The Struggle for Acceptance 1850-1880 (1974) p.224.

19. D. Rolph, 'Labour politics in the West Midlands between the wars', N.S.J.F.S., Vol. 18, 1978, pp. 43-44.



the separatism within the potters' union down to 1919 but also by the traditional local associations with Liberalism. The limitations of Liberal Radicalism became apparent to many Labour activists in the face of the general social problems of the 1900s, the acute difficulties associated with unemployment and the experience of the First World War. Yet the limitations of the franchise and the depressed trading of the 1900s and 1920s produced further practical obstacles to building and maintaining local Labour political organisations. The potters did not possess a sufficiently well-known or experienced local figure to present as a parliamentary candidate, or the funds to back him, until after the War. Nor did any striking sense of class antagonism grow from the potters' connexions with the Labour movement or the state. Indeed, on a number of issues which confronted the industry and its relation with central government the genuine unity of worker and employer responses retarded the generation of a sharply defined class awareness or independent political stance by pottery workers.

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Glossary

- BALL CLAY.** A clay found in Devon and Dorset, more plastic than china clay but not so white.
- BALLER.** A thrower's attendant, who weighs out balls of clay of the size required for each article, and generally takes the thrown articles and places them on a board ready for carrying to the drying stove.
- BAT.** A flat slab of clay used by pressers in moulding articles.
- BATTING.** The preparation of a bat by hitting a lump of clay with a heavy mallet to produce the required shape and size.
- BEDDING.** A method of preparing flat clay ware for the biscuit firing, by placing it in a sagger or box which is filled with powdered flint.
- BISCUIT or BISQUE.** Ware which has been fired ONCE before the application of the glaze.
- BISCUIT EMPTYING.** Removing biscuit ware from receptacles; more particularly from baskets in which it has been carried from the oven to the china scouring shop.
- BISCUIT FIRING.** Firing the oven or kiln containing unfired clay ware, to convert the latter into biscuit ware.
- BISCUIT OVEN or KILN.** A furnace in which unfired clay ware is converted into biscuit ware.
- BISCUIT PLACING.** Arranging pieces of unfired clay ware in saggars in readiness for the biscuit firing.
- BOARDS.** Planks generally about 6 feet long by 9 or 10 inches width and 1 inch thick on which articles of ware are placed for transport.

**BODY.** The porous substance of the ware made either of simple native clay unmixed with other ingredients, or composed of several, such as ball clay and calcined flint combined with Cornish stone and china clay in the case of earthenware.

**BONE or BONE ASH.** An ingredient largely used in china bodies.

**BONE CHINA.** China, the body of which contains a large percentage of calcined bone.

**BOSS.** The pad used by a printer to remove superfluous colour from the engraved copper plate.

**BUNG.** A pile (in an oven usually) consisting of a number of similar articles, such as a bung of plates, or a bung of saggars.

**BURNISHING of gold.** A polishing of the gilt surface with tools of agate, bloodstone, haematite.

**CALCINE.** As in bone and flint. To refine.

**CASTING.** The making of articles of pottery from clay slips poured into porous moulds; the clay sets slowly on their inner surfaces owing to absorption of water by the mould, and after a time the remainder of the liquid is poured out, leaving behind the clay articles as a deposit in the mould.

**CHINA.** 1. Generally all translucent ware. 2. Particularly, as in official classification, bone china only.

**CHINA CLAY (or KAOLIN).** The final decomposition product of Cornish stone freed from admixed impurities.

**CHINA FURNITURE.** A class of ware of great variety. Many types are pieces to be used in conjunction with other articles, e.g. heat insulators for teapot handles, eyelet rings for looms. Door knobs, electrical fittings and ink wells are other examples. Most of this ware is made of earthenware.

**CLAY or POTTER'S CLAY.** The prepared native clay or mixtures of clay with other materials when ready for the working potter.

**CLAY SHOP.** See 'Potters Shop'

**CLAY WARE.** Unfired articles of pottery.

**COARSE WARE.** Earthenware of a common or rough quality, frequently made from a local clay and dipped without previous firing in a simple lead glaze.

**COLOUR BLOWING.** Application of colour in the form of a spray.

**COLOUR DUSTING.** 1. A process carried on in connection with printing; the design is impressed by means of engraved plates on tissue paper with an oily medium, either coloured or uncoloured; the tissue paper is transferred to the ware with its pattern, the paper is plucked off, and powdered colour then dusted over the piece of pottery, adhering to the faint pattern of the oily medium.

2. Colloquially, for any 'oiling and dusting'.

**CORNISH STONE.** A partially decomposed granite found in the extreme south-west of England; when completely decomposed, it passes over into impure china clay.

**CRAZING.** The appearance of a fine network of cracks on the surface of a glazed article.

**DIPPING.** The immersion of ware in fluid glaze.

**DRAWING OF OVENS.** The removal of saggars of ware from the ovens after firing.

**DRYING STOVE.** The heated chamber in which clay ware is placed in order that it may give up the greater part of its moisture

**EARTHENWARE.** As distinguished from china etc: the great bulk of opaque ware, plain and decorated, made principally for domestic and general use; the body is usually made up of ball clay, china clay, flint and stone.

**EDGING.** 1. The scraping and finishing of the edges of pieces of clay ware before firing.

2. The ware-cleaning of tiles by scraping their edges after dipping.

**ELECTRICAL FITTINGS.** Articles of pottery intended to be used for the insulation of electrical conductors. Frequently included in China Furniture.

**ENAMEL COLOURS.** Colours used for on-glaze decoration of pottery.

**ENAMEL KILN.** Kiln for firing articles of pottery which have been decorated with enamel colours.

**FELSPATHIC CHINA or Porcelain.** China in the body of which felspar is used to obtain the necessary translucence.

**FETTLING.** The work of finishing a clay article by removing irregularities, straightening edges, smoothing the surface.

**FILTER PRESS.** A press in which the excess of moisture is squeezed out of a slip in the preparation of plastic clay.

**FINISHING.** A term to include many of the clay-fettling processes.

**FLAT PRESSING.** The shaping of dishes, plates, saucers and other articles which are technically termed 'flat', as distinct from 'hollow' ware. A 'bat' of clay is pressed down on to a mould and worked until it is in complete contact with the mould and the shape 'pressed' into the clay.

**FLINT.** An ingredient largely used in pottery bodies. Flint stones are calcined, broken and ground in water to form a slip.

**FLINTING.** A method of preparing clay ware for the biscuit firing, by placing the articles in a sagger with layers of powdered flint.

**FOOLINGS.** Drinking clubs in the industrial centres of the six towns.

**FOOTINGS.** The practice of a new worker to a department being welcomed by a small celebration or tea.

**FRIT.** verb. To melt together the ingredients of a glaze, preparatory to their use on finished pieces of pottery. When lead was fritted with other ingredients it became less soluble in weak acid and therefore less dangerous if it reached the stomach.

**GILDING.** Decorating with finely divided gold suspended in a suitable medium and applied to the surface of glost ware, which is afterwards fired again in a kiln.

**GLAZE.** 1. Before firing. A fluid preparation of various silicates or silico-borates, to which is added a lead compound, which is applied to the surface of ware by dipping, painting, blowing or other process.

2. After firing. The vitrified outer skin of a piece of pottery which renders a porous body impermeable by fluids.

**GLAZE BLOWING.** The application of glaze in the form of a spray by means of compressed air.

**GLOST FIRING.** The firing of ware after it has been dipped in glaze.

**GLOST OVEN.** The oven in which ware coated with unfired glaze is fired to produce the vitrified outer skin known as glaze on finished ware.

**GLOST PLACING.** Arranging pieces of ware coated with unfired glaze in saggars in readiness for the glost firing.

**GLOST WAREHOUSE.** The place in which glost ware is stored after the glost firing.

**GREEN.** 1. Unfired (if clay, flint). 2. Clay ware before firing.

**GROUND LAYING.** A method of applying colours. A pattern or ground is printed on white glazed ware with an oily medium and dry powdered

colour is dusted over it with a pad of cotton wool. The surplus is removed with clean cotton whilst the colour has adhered wherever it touches the medium.

**HOLLOW-WARE PRESSING.** The shaping of hollow articles, such as jugs, ewers. Two half moulds are used, a 'bat' is pressed on each and trimmed off, the two halves being finally joined together and attached to a base which has been made in a similar manner.

**HOVEL.** The conical brickwork erection built over or outside an oven or kiln to regulate the draught.

**JET.** Ware made from simple brown or red clays and coated with a glaze containing sufficient cobalt oxide to render the finished ware black.

**JIGGERING.** The shaping of an article with a hand tool on a mould rotated on the head of a jigger. (Jigger being vertical spindle carrying a revolving head which is rotated.)

**JOLLYING.** The shaping of a clay article by a semi-automatic tool called a profile, on or in a mould rotated on the head of a jigger.

**KILN.** A furnace in which articles to be fired are placed in an inner fire-brick chamber which can be heated to the required temperature without flame or gases from the fire entering the inner chamber or muffle.

**LATHE TREADING.** The work of driving a lathe for a turner, in this operation the turner's attendant generally rests the weight of the body on the left foot and works the treadle with the right foot.

**LEAD HOUSE.** The place where lead glazes are prepared and stored for use.

**LEADLESS GLAZE.** A glaze in which no lead compounds are used.

**LOOKING OVER BISCUIT WARE.** The examination of printed biscuit ware, before it is dipped in glaze, with a view to the removal of specks of colour or other blemishes.

**LOW SOLUBILITY GLAZE.** A glaze the dried material of which contains only a small proportion of lead soluble in diluted hydrochloric acid.

**MAJOLICA.** Decorative ware made of the same body as earthenware (or from red or yellow clays) with a glaze which, before application, has colouring oxides mixed or fritted with it.

**MAJOLICA PAINTING.** The application by means of a brush, of glaze with which colouring oxides or pigments have been mixed or fritted.

**MOULDS.** Matrices cast from plaster of Paris, in or on which articles are shaped from clay.

**ON-GLAZE DECORATION.** The application of ornament in colour, gold etc., to ware after it has been glazed and fired to the glost state.

**OVEN.** A furnace for the firing of ware enclosed in saggars.

**PAINTING.** The application to ware, by means of a brush, of colours or glaze.

**PHTHISIS.** Fibroid phthisis or lung disease medically. Locally known as 'Potters Rot'.

**PLACING.** See Glost or Biscuit placing.

**POLISHING.** The removal of irregularities from the surface of glost ware by means of a small emery wheel.

**POTBANK.** Local name for any china or earthenware factory.

**POTTERS ROT.** See Phthisis.

**POTTERS SHOP.** Workshops where clay articles are fashioned.

**PRESSING.** 1. The moulding of clay articles from plastic clay  
2. The moulding of articles from powdered clay in mechanical presses.

**PRINTING.** The decoration of ware by transferring to its surface patterns which have first been impressed on paper by means of an engraved roller or plate.

**PROFILE.** A tool used in pressing articles from plastic clay:-

1. The hand profile, which is generally made in fired pottery.
2. The machine profile, made in iron or steel and attached to a lever so that it can be pulled down and brought in contact with the clay as it revolves on the jigger head.

**PUGGING.** The passing of plastic clay through a pug-mill for the purpose of rendering the material homogenous and removing air bubbles.

**PUTTING-UP.** The handing of unglazed articles to the dipper for immersion in Glaze.

**RAW LEAD.** A lead compound which is used without being previously fritted.

**ROCKINGHAM.** Ware made from simple brown or red clay and coated with a glaze containing sufficient manganese to give the finished ware a rich brown hue.

**SAGGER.** A fireclay box used for containing ware during its firing in an oven. A corruption of safeguard.

**SANITARY WARE.** Baths, closets, urinals, operating tables, lavatory basins etc., whether made with a fireclay body, or one similar to that used for general earthenware.

**SCOURING.** 1. of biscuit ware which has been fired in powdered flint - in order to remove all flint dust. 2. of gold - a cleaning of the gilt surface.

**SHERD or SHORD RUCKS.** Areas of waste land where broken ware is disposed of. Often worked-out marl pits filled in with rejected ware and old saggars.

**SLIP.** A fluid which is of a creamy consistency. The term 'slip' is generally used to indicate fluid mixtures containing clay. When the fluid contains only bone, flint or stone, it is called slop.

**SLIP HOUSE.** The place where the body of the ware is prepared.



**SLIP KILN.** Large tank where clay slips are heated to drive off excess moisture by evaporation.

**SORTING.** The removal of irregularities from the surface of glost ware. It is also used , more normally, to denote the arranging of biscuit or glost ware in grades of quality.

**STONE WARE.** Earthenware of a hard homogenous texture resembling stone. It is frequently made from a local clay without admixture.

**TAKING OFF.** Taking a newly dipped article from the dipper.

**THIMBLE PICKING.** The picking over or sorting for further use of thimbles, stilts, spurs, strips, saddles, or any similar articles which have been used to support pieces of pottering during the process of glost firing.

**THREADING UP.** Stringing a number of small articles on a wire with a rubber washer between each in order that all may be dipped at the same time in glaze.

**THROWING.** The shaping of a clay article by hand on a potters wheel.

**TOWING.** The smoothing of the surface and edges of a clay article by pressing a wad of tow on it as it revolves on a jigger head.

**TRANSFERRING.** The conveying of patterns to the surface of pottery ware.

**WARE CLEANING.** The removal of superfluous glaze adhering to an article.

**WEDGING.** The treatment of clay by raising one piece of clay by hand and bringing it down upon another piece, to remove bubbles.

**WHEEL TURNING.** Maintaining in motion, by hand, of a large fly-wheel by which the potter's wheel is driven.

**WHIRLER.** A stand on which an article can be placed and caused to revolve by hand.

**WRIST-DROP.** A symptom of lead poisoning where a sufferer loses control and use of the wrist. The hand hangs paralysed.

Appendix 1Destination of Pottery Exports 1900-1925

Source: Annual Statement of the Trade of the United Kingdom, 1909 (1910) to 1925 (1926).

	1900	1904	1910	1915	1920	1925
TOTAL EXPORTS	2038	2106	2780	2054	7983	6445
TO BRITISH POSSESSIONS	658	861	1141	1006	3572	3315
% TO " "	32.3	40.88	41.04	49	44.75	51.44

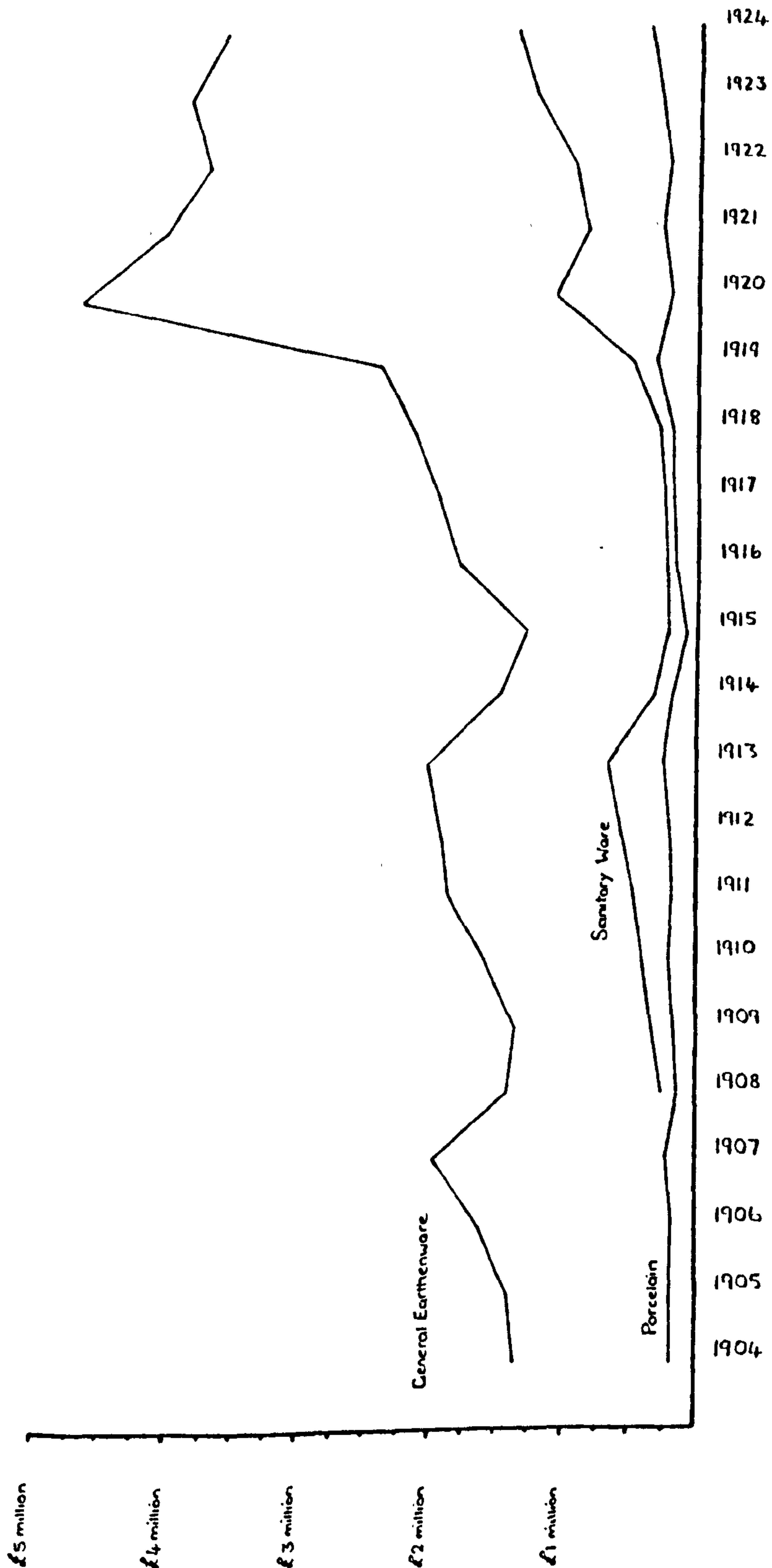
A. Percentage of Pottery Exports to British PossessionsB. Rank Order of Principal Pottery Export Markets

	1900	1904	1910	1915	1920	1925					
USA.	590	USA.	555	USA	506	Aust.	412	Canada	1004	Aust.	1214
Aust	292	Aust.	252	Aust.	368	USA	362	USA.	958	USA.	965
Canada	145	Canada	203	Canada	360	Argentina	252	Aust.	884	Canada	847
Germany	101	India	189	Argentina	247	Canada	237	Argentina	707	Argentina	434
India	82	S. Africa	156	Brazil	164	India	119	India	624	Brazil	305
S. Africa	70	Argentina	100	India	138	S. Africa	101	Brazil	474	India	266
France	65	Brazil	82	S. Africa	113	Brazil	100	France	363	S. Africa	248
Brazil	64	Germany	74	Germany	72	Spain	32	Scandinavia	348	Scandinavia	138
Argentina	57	France	62	France	59	France	27	Cuba	239	Cuba	123
Holland	55	Belgium	45	Chile	58	Holland	26	Brit WAF	158	France	114
Belgium	42	Holland	37	Holland	51	Brit WAF.	25	Belgium	158	Holland	99
Russia	40	Russia	36	Russia	46	China	19	Uruguay	140	Chile	96
Scandinavia	28	Brit. W. AF.	23	Brit WAF	41	Uruguay	16	Holland	135	Belgium	93
Brit W Africa	24	Scandinavia	20	Italy	39	Egypt	15	Spain	124	Spain	84
Chile	16	Chile	20	Uruguay	39	Chile	12	Egypt	110	Italy	82
Uruguay	15	Egypt	15	Egypt	34	Italy	8	Chile	99	China	56
Brit. W Indies	12	Spain	11	Scandinavia	28	Russia	7	Italy	72		

Appendix 2

Exports Per Sub-Industry 1904-1924 by Value

Source: Annual Statement of the Trade of the United Kingdom, 1909 (1910) to 1925 (1926).



Appendix 3

Single Company (Anon.) Wage Structure 1919

Source: CATU COLL, L573, J. Sedgley to S. Clowes, 11 May, 1919.

