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## Summary of thesis

Various publications have focussed attention on the building trade unions, usually with the aim of presenting an account of the history of an individual union. In most of them it has been assumed that one union for the building industry was the real and realisable objective of many of the actors in that history. The object of this thesis is to assess the validity of that assumption in the light of discussions on structural change within and between the unions concerned. The work takes the form of a historical account spanning the years of the twentieth century. It is based on surviving documentation and interviews with former officials of the unions concerned.

Firstly it is argued that changes in the labour process were a necessary pre-requisite for changes in trade union structure. The labour process is defined according to its specific social form, that is as a capitalist process of production and emphasis is placed on capital formation, on government policy, on the level of technology and on the division of labour within the construction industry, as factors which explain the long survival of a craft form of trade union organisation. Attention is directed to changes in the form of engagement of labour, to the emergence of labour-only sub-contracting, and its significance for trade union organisation in construction.

Secondly it is suggested that there is a close relationship between trade union government and trade union structure. Adjustments to the shape and size of trade unions are used by their leaders to foster their own authority and status within the emergent organisation.

It is concluded that these factors were more important in motivating changes than any commitment to a particular form of trade union organisation.

ONE BIG UNION? STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN BUILDING TRADE UNIONISM.

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## Introduction

"If an official of a building trade union today were offered the choice between the organisation of the trade in 1833 and its organisation in 1923, he might well prefer the former with all its immaturity, to the muddle and chaos of the many unions of today, still suspicious and disunited, linked only by a Federation whose powers are limited."

R. Postgate The Builders History

p.102

"One union for the building industry. It was the vision which had inspired the men who had created the short-lived Operative Builders Union ... Within the industry and on the sites, it was recognised that the men of the A.U.B.T.W. were primarily dedicated to this ideal. Some in fact might believe that it had become almost a mania to the exclusion of other objectives. This view, however, ignores the significance behind the urge to create one vast, powerful building union."

W. Hilton Foes to Tyranny

p.283

"At the 1959 conference (of the ASW) a resolution proposing 'one union for the building industry' was overwhelmingly rejected. Carpenters and joiners were not yet prepared to end the existence of their century-old organisation."

T.J. Connelly The Woodworkers

p.116

One union for the building industry. It is a theme which has been developed and endorsed in the various histories of the building trades unions. From Raymond Postgate's classic study,

published in 1923 (1), through to the most recent 'house history' written by W.S. Hilton, then Research Officer to the AUBTW in 1963 (2) one union for the building industry has been identified as the objective in trade union re-organisation - from "muddle and chaos" to "one vast powerful building union." The intention of previous commentators - Postgate (3), Higenbottam (4), Connelly (5) and Hilton (6) was to provide a historical account of the growth and development of trade union organisation. In every case the publication has been issued by the union (or the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives in Postgate's case) and the institutional bias has been readily apparent. With the exception of Postgate's analysis of the years before the outbreak of the Great War, there has been little attempt to delve beneath the explanations and directives of national reports and journals. And since these accounts are centred (again with the exception of Postgate) on only one of the many unions recruiting within the area of building production there has been a tendency to avoid a serious and critical discussion of union structure in the light of existing arrangements and the profound commitment by many union leaders to the status quo.

The origins of one national organisation are located by the Webbs, Postgate and Hilton at least in the Operative Builders' Union, a body which was founded around 1831 or 32 and which survived only until 1834. Just as the Bible tells us that in the beginning the whole earth had only one language and few words, so it seems there was created after the repeal of the Combination Acts only one union with a few trades sections for the whole of the building industry. There has been no serious attempt to evaluate the account which we have inherited from

the Webbs (7) which stresses the unity of the building trades during the 1830's. Obeisance is duly made to their version of the formation and disintegration of the OBU both in published and unpublished (8) accounts. It was the "solitary example, prior to the present century, in the history of those (ie building) trades of a federal union embracing all classes of building operatives, and purporting to extend over the whole country." (9)

An elaborate account is given by the Webbs of the grand rules and constitution of that organisation, of initiation ceremonies and resistance to the 'document'.

An evaluation of the scale and extent of implantation of the OBU would provide the scope for another research project and cannot be undertaken here. But doubts must be raised concerning the accuracy and value of the assertions made by the Webbs. Some of the documentation described by them as containing rituals ascribed to the Builders' Union must more properly be attributed to the Operative Stonemasons Society. There is no evidence that the making parts book, which has survived with the archive of that union has any connection with the Builders Union (10). And accounts of the OBU rely heavily on the Pioneer a journal which was associated with the OBU, from 1832 but which subsequently became the organ of the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union (11). James Morrison, editor of the Pioneer had, according to Postgate a 'religious respect and deference' for Robert Owen and it is not impossible that his enthusiasm for Owen's ideals coloured his judgement concerning the strength and the long-term potential of the Builders' Union. It is apparent that there was a concerted campaign

initiated outside of the ranks of trade unionists in building, designed to persuade the Builders' Union to endorse Owen's ideals. Two employers, Hansom and Welsh 'set out to work' the Builders Union with this end in view (12). Our accounts of that union and its significance have derived mainly from these sources outside of the ranks of the organised working class.

The origins of the OBU are usually placed in 1831/2. At the first of its delegate meetings held in Sep 1833, attracting 275 delegates who it was claimed represented more than 30,000 members Owen spoke in favour of a Grand National Guild of Builders, but only one year later in 1834 it seems that the union had collapsed following defeats in a series of major disputes. (13) It is hard to believe that a genuine union organisation was constructed according to the detailed and sophisticated constitution outlined by the Webbs, in the space of little more than a year. And it is still more difficult to give credence to this idea in a period when trade unionism was just emerging from the Combination Acts, when national trade union organisations were few in number and with only a limited membership (14), when communications were difficult and the radical press still constrained by Stamp Duties. (15) The account of the OBU given by the Webbs conflicts strangely with their own famous definition of a trade union as a "continuous association of wage earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their working lives." (16) Whatever else the OBU may have been it was certainly not continuous, since it survived for two, or at the most three years.

There are doubts too as to the extent to which it could justifiably be maintained that the Builders' Union was national in

its scope. Even the Webbs claim only that the OBU purported to organise throughout the country, but their account suggests that the Builders' Union was based most strongly in Lancashire and <sup>other</sup> parts of the North-West.

It was in this area that the battle against the 'contract system' was most advanced. In earlier years building work had been organised by a customer requiring work ordering it directly through small masters. Under the contract system a single contract was reached with a 'general contractor' who then either employed tradesmen directly or through a form of sub-contract to the working masters. This system was opposed by craftsmen since it tended to undermine established rates of pay and conditions which would have been observed by the small masters. It was a problem which was general to the building trades and it provided a reason for co-operation between trades since small masters in all trades were subjected to the same general contractor. It was in Lancashire that the major struggles against the contract system were waged during the summer of 1833 and it was the defeats there which prefaced the downfall of 'universal' organisation soon after the creation of the OBU. (17) Other cities had organised to the same end - Postgate suggests that London and Birmingham apart from Manchester were the most important centres of the OBU, but it is clear that there was considerable regional variation and that support was centred on the cities especially in the industrialising centres of North Western England.

The OBU can most reasonably be described on the basis of existing evidence as a loose federation of developing trade societies, joining together in a common movement against the contracting

system. Far from being a 'great union' with a programme which had 'many affinities with modern Sovietism', it was a body which was constrained by the weakness and autonomy of its affiliated trade societies. R. Postgate, who elaborated on the Webbs' account of the 'Great Operative Builders Union' is obliged to concede that it is improbable that the OBU preceded the formation of individual trade societies. And in two important instances - the GUC&J and the OSM it is clear that a distinctive national identity was retained despite the existence of the OBU (18). Postgate's assertion that

"Many relics of autonomy had been left to the various societies that had made up the union, and we may presume that the effect ... was to remove these and to centralize these powers in the hands of the Grand Committee." (19)

does not bear close examination. 'Exclusive' government was never renounced by the affiliated trade societies and, following Postgate's own account, 'universal government' was not associated with 'universal' arrangements for contributions and funding of strikes.

The emphasis of the Webbs, and following them of Postgate on the strength and unity of the OBU relates more to the problems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than it does to the question of trade union organisation in the 1830's. The perspective of the Webbs was informed by opposition to the sectionalism associated with the older trade societies. Their objective was to highlight the alternative organisational possibilities associated with the 'New Unionism', confronting the craft conservatism of trade union leaders from the older trade societies. In consequence of this approach they underlined in their History the novel unity of the Builders Union by

contrast with the craft sectionalism which dominated the British trade union movement from the middle of the nineteenth century. They refer to the OBU as a 'federal union' or a 'federal organisation' but they stress the integration and the unity of these years as a counter to the dominant influence of the craft leaders in their own time. Their views were absorbed by Postgate who identified the OBU as a forerunner of the syndicalist movement. A precedent for the 'one big union' of the syndicalist campaign provided a useful fillip for the amalgamation movement. Postgate's real intention was revealed in the comment cited at the beginning of this chapter. It was to highlight the value of complete unity, by contrast with the newly established Federation of his own period. A more accurate account of the limited nature of the association of 1833 might have seemed to vindicate, rather than to question the authority and value of the NFBTO. But evidence runs counter to his assertion that officials might prefer the unity of 1833 to the middle of 1923. The unity of 1923 allowed a formal liaison between trades under the control of the leading officials of the individual trade societies. There is little justification for the claim that they wished to sacrifice this for a more integrated and unified structure.

The accounts of the Webbs and of Postgate concerning the OBU passed into the folklore of the building trade unions. The existence of the OBU was frequently used as proof both of the possibility and the potential of full amalgamation, by its advocates. What had been done in the 1830's could be done again on a permanent basis. Hilton's comment is just one example of the way in which this account was given credence by later writers. The OBU was evidence of a 'vision' which inspired men on the sites - 'almost a mania to the exclusion of other

objectives.' It will be argued that the views which prevailed within the AUBTW were far less certain than Hilton suggests by this comment. But the intention at this stage is not to question the validity of his claim. It is cited here simply as evidence of an ideological tradition within the left of the building trades unions which has not to date been seriously questioned.

Implicit in Postgate's account of the OBU was the conflict between the 'exclusives' and the 'syndicalist revolutionary' approach of universal government. The 'exclusives' were the forerunners of those leaders of the craft societies who opposed the principles of industrial unionism.

"We will give them a new name, we will call them the Pukes - it is a sickening idea - and will remind us that we are looking upon something that is filthy." said the Pioneer (20).

It was the 'dead hand' of the exclusives - and later of the leaders of the craft societies-which held back the movement for one big union. Fundamental to the campaign for an industrial union in the years before 1914 was the notion that it would be opposed by the vested interests, at the official level, within the existing craft organisations. The movement for democracy was allied with the movement for amalgamation in a critique of officialdom which seemed to be fully vindicated by the opposition of leaders in all of the building trade unions with the exception of the OBS to proposals for a broad amalgamation. Questions of the internal government and control within existing unions were related in this account to the problem of trade union structure.

The aim of this work is threefold. Firstly it is intended to explore the impact of an ideological tradition which stressed the significance of the 'one Big Union'. What implications did it have for the building trades unions? The Webbs stated that:

"Within the order of what is usually called a trade, there are often smaller circles of specialised classes of workmen, each sufficiently distinctive in character to claim separate consideration. The first idea is always to cut the Gordian knot by ignoring these differences and making the larger circle the unit of government. So fascinating is this idea of 'amalgamation' that it has been tried in almost every industry." (21)

Was the question of amalgamation broached because it was a 'fascinating idea'? Were amalgamations accepted because of popular enthusiasm for the 'one Big Union'? It will be argued that the long-standing ideological tradition had little relevance to negotiations concerning amalgamation. The One Big Union, cited so often, was not the real aim of most of the participants in discussions on amalgamation.

Secondly it is aimed to evaluate the significance of changes in the labour process in building production for the structure of trade unions. The labour process is construed not merely as the physical activity of labour in relation to the means of production. Rather it is considered within its specific social form, that is as a capitalist process of production. As Marx stated:

"In the labour process regarded also as a capitalist process of production, the means of production utilize the worker, so that work appears only as an instrument which enables a specific quantum of value, i.e. a specific mass of objectified labour, to suck in living labour in order to sustain an increase in itself."

(22)

In this context attention will be given to the process of capital formation within an industry which remains notoriously 'under-capitalised', where 'cash-flow' remains the bugbear of the small employer. The impact of changes in the political sphere have been of profound importance for an industry which has been used so often as an 'economic regulator' to adjust the economy as a whole. Shifts in government policy form a continuing theme against which industrial developments are placed. Innovations in the organisation and technology of building production are drawn against this background. Changes as fundamental as the ratification of payment by results within the national working rule agreement in 1947 and the encouragement given to less official arrangements for the engagement and payment of labour in subsequent years with the development of labour-only sub-contracting are set in the broader context of political and industrial changes affecting building production. A simple causal connection between the change in payment systems in the post-war years and the deterioration of trade union organisation in this area is not in itself a sufficient explanation for adjustments to trade union structure. Labour-only sub-contracting must be seen as part of a particular and deliberate policy pursued by employers in the post-war years. It will be argued that it was only one facet - indeed a very important one - in the policies which were adopted. Other factors which must be taken into

account include the adjustments which were made to the physical elements of the labour process, to the materials and the instruments of labour. What effect did such changes have on the organisation of labour within building production? How far should adjustments to trade union structure be attributed to changes within the labour process itself?

Finally it is planned to survey the relationship between trade union government and structure. The problem is posed in the first instance through the question of control of negotiation and formulation of projects for structural change. Who is primarily responsible for initiatives in this area? How are decisions arrived at? And who benefits from them? Attention will be given to the issue identified by the Webbs concerning the relations between the central executive body and the local unit of government in each society. (23) As Les Wood, current GS of UCATT has put it, the question is one of 'Who leads the union?' (24) The response derives from the continued tension between central authority and local autonomy. Questions of finance have proved to be a critical indicator of the balance of internal power. It will be suggested that there is, in the long term, a trend towards the concentration of power in the hands of the general secretary of the major craft societies and especially of the largest of them, the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers (ASW). This trend has been actively fostered by successive leaders of that union and adjustments to union structure have been employed as a means of furthering the central control of union organisation.

The work which follows takes the form of a historical account spanning the years of the twentieth century. It is clearly

impossible to give detailed attention to each of the many unions which were based, or claimed membership, in the building industry. And attention has been directed generally to the largest and most important of the unions concerned. As a consequence of this approach there has been little detailed attention to many unions which played a distinctive part within the industry. Concern is primarily with the ASW, the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers (AUBTW) and the Amalgamated Society of Painters and Decorators (ASP&D) for whom unfortunately, no official history has been written. Reference will be made to many other organisations some of them based almost solely on the building industry, others recruiting within that area, but with their roots in other sectors. The Electrical Trades Union, the Plumbing Trades Union, the Heating, Ventilating and Domestic Engineers and others are outside of the scope of a discussion concerned with structural change in the building trade unions. And smaller societies which are more properly within the boundaries of the building industry, the Plasterers, the Slaters and Tilers, the Building and Monumental Workers Association receive less attention than might be justified if this project were not concerned specifically with the question of trade union structure. It should also be noted that it is the societies with a craft tradition which have provided the focus for this work. Unions of builders' labourers and two large general unions, the T&GWU and the NUG&MWU have played an important part within building production, although their role has been largest within that area which is now defined by the terms of the Civil Engineering Agreement. These organisations are discussed only insofar as they affect inter-union relations. There is no intention here of assessing their contribution to building trade unionism more generally.

The historical account is broken into three distinct parts. The first is concerned with the craft tradition and with the organisation of craft based societies before the Great War. 1914 was a critical year for the building trades unions. It was marked by one of the longest disputes to affect the building trades unions during the twentieth century. It was marked by the formation of a 'breakaway' union, the Building Workers Industrial Union, which countered the craft base of trade union organisation. And it was marked by the outbreak of the Great War which had a profound impact on the labour movement generally and on the building trade unions in particular. It was in 1914 that moves were first made towards a permanent liaison between the building trade unions. And so it is that this year marks a break in the narrative. The second part is concerned with the federal organisation set up to co-ordinate the activities of the individual unions. The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives (NFBTO) dominated inter-union relations for more than fifty years. Between 1920 and 1959 its existence was almost unquestioned. Consolidated during the inter-war years it played a key role in national negotiations. It was recognised both by employers and government as the voice of the building trade unions. And it was only with its decline towards the end of that period that more far-reaching structural changes became possible. The third part of this account is concerned with the period 1960-71, during which time the question of amalgamation was of increasing relevance. It was a period characterised by declining trade union organisation and the increased use of labour-only sub-contracting. It was a decade of deepening crisis which ended with the formation of UCATT. A rationalisation of union structure was eventually effected in 1971.

Since the building trade unions recruited almost entirely amongst men for most of this period, references to members and officials of these unions assume the masculine gender.

Pt.1. The Building Trade Unions Before 1914.

The period before 1914 is characterised by a fragmented union organisation, with craft divided from craft, and district from district in an industry which was noted for its local identity. A recent study by Richard Price entitled Masters, Unions and Men: work control in building and the rise of labour, 1830-1914 (CUP 1980) has stressed the significance of informal practices and local work group authority for job control in the building trades.

By 1914 it was clear that this local perspective was being bypassed, both in the realm of trade union organisation and collective bargaining. The outbreak of the Great War marked a turning point. The focus, after that date shifts to national issues and national organisation.

In this, the first part of the thesis, attention is directed to the nature of union organisation during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Which were the major unions in building production and how were they organised? What was the state of the industry and how was it evolving? The study then points to the existing relations between employers and unions as the local basis of negotiations was modified by the establishment of national conciliation machinery. Finally the question of trade union government is raised, again with the objective of stressing the high degree of local autonomy permitted within all of the unions. Amalgamation discussions were already underway, and this progress is traced, in the bricklayers; the carpenters' and the painters' trade societies, before these negotiations were superceded by initiatives in favour of 'One Big Union'.

CHAPTER 1

THE BUILDING TRADE UNIONS BEFORE 1914

## The Building trade unions before 1914

### Introduction

Building trade workers in 1914 were organised into 72 unions, both local and national (1). They ranged in size from the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners (ASC&J) a body which claimed 69,036 members in 1914, to tiny trade societies which recruited purely on a local basis. Many of these bodies had their origins in the craft societies organised in the late eighteenth, or early nineteenth century. Whether or not their lineage can be traced directly back to the craft guilds of earlier periods is a matter for debate, but it is certainly the case that, by the 1830's, there were many flourishing trade societies which could thereafter claim an unbroken history (2). These early unions, in building as in most other sectors of production, were formed by artisans, engaged predominantly on handicraft work (3). Each society was based on one trade or group of related trades and members cultivated a pride in their craft skills which encouraged the exclusivity of many of these unions. Membership was a privilege which was confined to the time-served craftsman or to workers who could claim a comparable level of skill.

The function of these early craft societies was twofold. Firstly they were organised to defend the trade interests of their members. The tactic adopted was the control of the supply of skilled labour. Provided that their skills were in demand it was likely that craft workers would be able to command high wages and reasonable working conditions. There were three major features associated with the craft control of labour supply, which were taken up by societies of stonemasons, carpenters and joiners, bricklayers, painters and others. Firstly the ratio of apprentices to fully trained craftsmen was strictly controlled. Tasks which were

designated as craft work were to be undertaken only by the skilled worker, that is someone with an appropriate period of training and experience. The demarcation of an area of craft operations was vital to craft identity and control of entry into the trade was designed to limit the employer's capacity to draw on an alternative supply of skilled labour. Secondly it was intended to control the number of hours for which an operative might work. The normal working hours would be decided within each locality and arrangements for overtime working were severely restricted. Thirdly the control of labour supply was effective only because output too was controlled. Fundamental to craft organisation was opposition to payment by results. Payment was made, at least within the respectable areas of the trade, in accordance with time worked, rather than with output achieved. The principle was periodically subject to attack by the building employers and, as in engineering, the method of payment often provided the battleground over which the wider issues of industrial control were fought. (4)

Secondly they undertook to provide friendly benefits, payments for accident, sickness and old age, as well as insurance against loss of tools and for funeral payments. This reinforced control over the supply of labour insofar as it kept men off the labour market who might otherwise accept work below the price set by the union. Moreover it provided a measure of insurance against the adverse circumstances which could wreck the lives of even the most skilled of working men. Craftsmen who were distinguished from the mass of workers by their high earnings could afford to pay the high affiliation fees and the regular contributions which were required of the trade unionist in return for these benefits. They formed an elite which was

able, by virtue of its organisation into trade unions, to expect its high and regular income to be maintained. Membership was a privilege which was confined to the time-served craftsman or to workers who could claim a comparable level of skill. The right to friendly benefits both reflected and reinforced the superior standing of the craft worker. (5)

Craft organisation was associated then with an elite of workers - which was concerned to defend its privileged position and to restrict access, both to jobs and to trade union membership. If politically and socially it often represented a conservative force, it was because the recognised abilities of this elite gave it a standing which encouraged caution in respect of changes and an allegiance to many aspects of the existing pattern of social relations. (6)

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the supremacy of the craftsman was challenged by the emergence of a 'new unionism' involving the unskilled or semi-skilled worker. Labourers could not afford the high contributions required by the craft societies and their less regular employment precluded the possibility of providing a wide range of benefits if the new societies were to become viable. They subsisted on lower contributions made for trade and funeral benefits alone and relied on strike action to achieve their aims. Their organisational style was more aggressive than their craft predecessors, since their objects necessitated the extension of trade unionism to as many workers as possible and their political stance, like their industrial organisation, was more radical. (7) Four major unions catering specifically for navvies and builders' labourers had been established by

1914. (8) But the organisation of this category of workers, with their fluctuating employment prospects was no easy task. Workers were often obliged to move, not only from one employer to another, but from one industry to another in order to maintain regular employment. Although the extent of such mobility ought not to be exaggerated, for many men regarded themselves specifically as builders' labourers rather than simply as labourers, it was a tendency which boosted membership amongst general unions which did not confine their recruitment to the building world. By 1914 both the National Union of General Workers and the Workers Union could claim a base in this area.

(9)

Within the two broad categories of trade unions in construction - the craft and the non-craft, there was then a wide diversity in the level and types of organisation which existed by the beginning of the twentieth century. Even where national (and even international) societies operated, there was still occasion for conflict between two unions each organising the same class of workers. The ASC&J was subject to competition from its parent organisation, the General Union of Carpenters and Joiners (GUC&J), which numbered only 8,505 members in 1914. There were two major societies of bricklayers, the Operative Bricklayers Society (OBS), the larger of the two, claiming 26,363 members in 1914 compared with the 1,604 members of the Manchester Unity Operative Bricklayers Society. And for painters and decorators there were two major societies in England & Wales until 1904, but neither of them could claim to be national in scope. Although the Webbs, writing in 1897, suggested that the proper unit of government for a trade union should be the whole area of the British Isles, there were, for the most part, separate national organisations for

building trade workers in Scotland, and a variety of local trade societies in Ireland, as elsewhere, complicating the overall picture. (10) The Operative Builders Union of the 1830's has been claimed as a model for a unified structure for all of the building trades, but seventy years after it was devised, the organisation of building workers was characterised by diversity rather than by unity. (11)

#### The Building Industry pre 1914

Building activity before the first world war was conducted by a large number of firms each of which had very few workers. The 1907 Census of Production does not provide details for the building industry concerning the size of firms, according to the number of employees, but it has been estimated that the average labour force for each firm was less than 12 men. (12) Certainly it is the case that building work was on the whole undertaken by small organisations, most of which were locally based. Firms of medium size, employing around 200 men were common in and around the bigger cities and in London a few large organisations were already operating - for example Holland, Hannen and Cubitts. But it was the small, often family based firm which predominated, operating in the local situation in relation to the opportunities provided by local enterprise. In Manchester for example, the building industry must be understood in relation to the textile industry, just as in South Wales it was related to the coal trade. Various factors operated at national level to affect the operations of building all over the country. Fluctuations in the interest rate, or the impact of war are perhaps the most obvious examples. But in the last resort building responded to local conditions,

and was carried out by firms which were for the most part based in that locality. (13)

The structure and organisation of building work had been modified during the last half of the nineteenth century as the direct contacts between the customer and the master craftsman, common in earlier periods, had broken down. It was replaced, in many areas, by an arrangement whereby a general builder, often an estate developer co-ordinated the activities of several trades, either through employing tradesmen direct, or on a sub-contract basis, sometimes to specialist firms (14).

It followed from this system of contracting for work that employment was predominantly casual as workers would be taken on for a particular contract, with a likelihood of being laid off when that project came to an end. The larger firms would be more likely to retain a nucleus of regularly employed operatives, and it seems probable that the more skilled the worker, the greater his chances of continuous employment (15). Employment was subject to seasonal interruption, ostensibly because of the problems associated with winter weather. But it has been argued that the winter decrease in activity was due as much to economic calculations as to factors which were strictly climatic. Winter work was more costly because it was likely to be interrupted by bad weather, and daylight working hours were shorter. Painters, bricklayers and carpenters were affected by the prevalence of seasonal unemployment, although it was the painters who suffered most (16). So the building worker was subject to unemployment or underemployment, both because of the system of contracting which situated a worker only in accordance with the demand for his labour on a

particular job, and because of seasonal fluctuations in building activity.

Building activity was affected by severe cyclical fluctuations, marked by a longer periodicity than fluctuations in the business cycle and this had a dramatic effect on the over-all prospects of employment. Building booms overlapped with upturns in the economy generally. Activity in building would rise during the upswing and continue to expand even when the boom had broken in other sectors. When the boom finally broke, the reaction was a strong one and slumps often persisted for many years. (17) The effects were mediated by the variation in local experience and it was possible for a town or region to remain reasonably active, whilst other parts of the country were experiencing a slump. Conversely there were some areas, where there was little manufacturing industry and a low demand for new housebuilding, where the 'boom' had only a limited impact. The prospects of employment in another town or another region only partly alleviated the severe effects of the building cycle on the earnings and security of the building operative.

If unemployment was a regular experience because of seasonal fluctuations and the system of contracting, it was endemic during the years of slump. The effects could be catastrophic. They are vividly portrayed in Robert Tressall's classic account of the Ragged Trousered Philanthropists (18). The painters, who form the subject of the novel, are the trade most vulnerable to fluctuations in building activity. The hardship and degradation of their lives are exposed and explained in a volume which relies, in essence, on Tressall's personal

experience as a housepainter. The scene is set during the winter months, in a coastal town in the South of England. Far removed from the manufacturing centres of the country, the building trades are reliant on housebuilding and repair for their employment. This source of demand for their work is unreliable; sweating is common and unemployment a constant threat. Not surprisingly trade union organisation is scarcely mentioned although Owen and his comrades struggle to put over a socialist message. (19) Casual and seasonal fluctuations in work, together with the vagaries of the political and economic climate dominated the work experience of the building trades operative, defining and limiting the prospect for trade union organisation.

The 1890's saw an upswing in the building cycle from the slump at the end of the previous decade. Activity was at its peak in 1898 and housebuilding continued to boom until 1903. It was in estate development that the demand for labour was particularly high. Developers put up the capital for suburban housebuilding in anticipation of rising demand and their profits were made, as much from rising land values as from the sale of houses. (20) Activity was at its height around London, where the extension of the suburbs was associated with the movement of families of modest means away from the inner city areas. The upper classes had made this move in the middle years of the nineteenth century and their example was followed by the lower orders, with a pattern of outward migration which provided new scope for housebuilders. (21) The London suburbs spread rapidly during the 90's - Ilford, Walthamstow, Enfield, Edmonton, Tottenham, Willesden, Ealing, Acton, Wimbledon & Croydon all grew by more than 30% (22).

Cheaper transport costs encouraged a trend which enabled skilled artisans as well as the middle classes to move to the outskirts of the city. Workmen's trains were run from the 1890's and to the East and South of the city speculators looked to the production of housing which was cheap enough to be taken up by the respectable working class, even when new (23).

The scale of operations associated with estate development and the type of housing which was required pointed the way for economies of scale through standardisation of certain features of these houses. Custom-designed houses were possible only for the rich. For the estate developer concerned with housing for families of middling income standardisation was a necessity. This is not to suggest that the traditional handicraft basis of housebuilding was eliminated. Rather it is to point to the impact of repeating the design and many features as a means of reducing costs. As a contemporary noted:

"Multiplication of the same pattern is to the builder of suburban houses what it is to the manufacturer. They can be built cheaper and quicker of the same plans and templates, window frames and sashes, the same stone dressings, the same fastenings and iron-mongery are used, than if each of these things undergoes modification to suit individual taste... The builder knows exactly the width and number of bricks and closers required for each pier; he can tell the number of bricks required for each house; he can order ornamental stringcourses and cornices wholesale, as he can his iron guttering and his railings... All this multiplication of the same detail and fittings enables a considerable reduction

to be made in the cost of erecting a few hundreds of houses." (24)

The boom of the 90's was followed by a severe slump during the first decade of the 20th century. There was a decline in building around London after 1903 which was associated with rising site values in the city centre and delays in the provision of adequate suburban transport facilities. (25)

Unemployment rose as building activities were curtailed.

Matters were worsened by innovations in materials which undermined the value placed on some traditional craft skills. The introduction of the fully load-bearing steel frame and the use of reinforced concrete were probably the most notable. Steel framed buildings were put up in the USA as early as 1883, but it was not until 1904 that the first British example, the Ritz Hotel, was erected. (26) Concrete had been used in foundation works from the early 19th century, but it was not until the invention of reinforced concrete that it could be applied to whole structures. Buildings of concrete became more common in Britain from the beginning of the century and although it was not much used for housing, it replaced masonry, and to a certain extent brickwork, on many large buildings. (27) Its use on floors and roofing meant that carpenters, as well as bricklayers and masons, were adversely affected by the cut in employment prospects. But it was the last two groups who suffered most, for both the steel frame and the introduction of reinforced concrete tended to lower the demand for their skills. (28) The other major innovation during this period concerned the introduction of woodcutting machinery which had an impact on the demand for carpenters and joiners. By 1906 it was argued that: "These machine joinery workers are now

established in almost every district... With trade drifting in this direction, and the substitution of iron and concrete and other materials in place of wood in the construction of buildings accounts to a large extent for the number of unemployed." (29)

These changes were no doubt important ones for the men who were displaced by new materials and machines. They often struck contemporaries as typical of mass production methods and yet it must be recognised that at no time were the effects as far reaching as the innovations which were made at about the same time in engineering production. The technical revolution in that area which had begun as early as the 1880's involved larger units of production with increased specialisation, the application of machine tools and the emergence of mass production. It enabled employers to dispense with tradesmen who previously had been highly valued for their manual dexterity, and to replace them with semi-skilled assemblers. (30) It had widespread implications for engineering production, but it was not paralleled in building where changes were more limited. Whilst 'skill-displacing technological change was an important source of grievance for some workers' (31), this was by no means generally the case. New materials and methods were most commonly used on large public buildings - hotels, government buildings and so on, and their application was less common in the housebuilding sector. (32) Only the larger firms would be likely to take up the new materials and methods in building, and given the predominance of the small firm, which has already been shown, it is likely that large numbers of building workers would not be affected, although of course competition for work, already sharp as a result of the slump, was intensified.

Manufacturing industry had developed in conjunction with the investment of the social overhead capital essential to its operation. Canals, railways, bridges and embankments, roads, footpaths, harbours and docks all provided employment for some of the operatives who might otherwise have sought work in building itself. Whilst these large-scale projects made less call on the skilled operative than they did on the labour of the navy, they relied in some measure on the skills of the traditional building trades. As the population was concentrated in towns, so attention was turned to questions of public health and safety. The construction of sewers and sewage disposal work, surface drains, waterworks, reservoirs, wells, aqueducts and conduits was followed by the application of power supplies, gas and electricity, further extending the scope for the employment of the building and contracting trades. (33) Whilst the value of output, in construction work other than building was lower, at the time of the 1907 Census of Production, than the value of output in building itself, it represented a significant proportion of the whole, both in terms of the proportion of total value, and because of the scale and innovation suggested by some construction work. (34) Some firms, which previously had confined their activities to building work, turned their attention to the possibilities opened up by the new types of construction. The Cumbrian firm of John Laing's, who were masons, father to son from the 18th century, broadened the scope of their operations in response to the opportunities in this field. Their first major contract, outside of their traditional area, was for the erection of the central electric lighting station in Carlisle in 1898; said to be the first electricity power station in the North West of England (35). From this they ventured into other related contracts, for a reservoir and for sewerage works.

Alongside the traditional forms of production for building, there was developing a type of production which was generally large-scale, and which attracted mostly the bigger firms which were operating on building work. But the new construction played a lesser part for the building trades than might be suggested by its value, since it recruited its workers primarily from the ranks of the navvies and labourers, some of whom would be drawn from outside of the industry altogether. And in building work itself, it was the traditional forms of manufacture which predominated, despite the innovations in respect of the mass production of some features. Unlike engineering, it cannot be claimed that building production was revolutionised in these years although some processes were standardised and larger scale works undertaken, in response to the new opportunities available.

Building activity picked up again after the slump, and in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of war employment prospects brightened. Only for masons, who relied more than the other trades on the large-scale building projects, was there a dramatic decline in employment opportunities, and this grade of craftsmen, formerly the elite of the building world, found their status and their bargaining position sadly eroded.

#### Collective Bargaining before 1914

Relations between employers and unions were rooted in local conditions before 1914. More than most other industrial activities building was part of a local labour market which varied in accordance with geological, economic and social factors and it is not therefore surprising that there was a

considerable difference, not only in the standard of wages and conditions, but also in the way in which these factors were regulated. The importance of local conditions was emphasised within the Report of the Inquiry by the Board of Trade into the earnings and hours of labour of workpeople in the UK in 1906 (36). The average earnings of men working full-time were highest in London, it was suggested, higher in the North of England than in the Midlands, and higher in both these districts than in the rest of England and Wales. They were generally higher in Scotland than in England, with the exception of London and were lowest in Ireland. Rates of wages were in general higher, and hours shorter in the larger towns and cities than in the smaller towns and country districts. Weekly hours of labour varied too, from an average of about 51 hours in London, the North of England and Scotland to averages of 55-56 hours in the Midlands and other parts of England and Wales. (37) In many areas collective agreements were reached between representatives of the employers and the operatives and by 1899 there were nearly 500 such agreements covering 260 different localities (38). Whilst the craft controls built up in earlier decades were not abandoned, the trend was towards the joint regulation of wages and conditions on a local or a district basis.

The local basis of negotiations lent a particular importance to the question of local trade union organisation. It was the local branch or Management Committee (where there was more than one branch) which was responsible for the establishment with the employers of a common working rule agreement to cover the locality or district. Within the OBS it was stipulated that where there was more than one trade working

under the same code of working rules, there should be a central committee of up to 7 members to deal with all trade matters (39). Similar provision was made in the GUC&J where a district committee might be formed to consider trade matters generally and 'where advisable to take joint action with kindred societies on matters of dispute' (40) Within the Amalg. Soc. of House Decorators and Painters it was the District Trade Management Committee which had the power to regulate the rates of wages, hours of labour, overtime and general conditions affecting their members (41), although they had no authority in respect of ordinary branch business. And in the ASC&J there was a similar rule to permit the formation of a Managing Committee for the purpose of conducting negotiations and implementing local working rules (42). The ASC&J rulebook also specified the arrangements which were to govern relations between two societies of carpenters and joiners both operating in the district, allowing the formation of a United Trades Committee. When the question of a standard rate of wages for carpenters and joiners of 7½d an hour was proposed in Norwich in 1899, it was the Management Committee who led the discussions with employers, and who initiated action on the question. It was the District or Management Committee which was central to the settlement and observation of the working rule agreement on behalf of the individual unions.

The employers' organisation, the National Association of Master Builders was founded in 1878 on the basis of affiliations from local associations, especially in the North and the Midlands. Its functions were defined both as a means of securing unity and mutual support against combinations of building operatives and as a means of regulating contracts

between builders and their customers. During the early 1890's the Association was faced with a growing militancy on the part of some workers, especially in the London region, where the increased demand for building labour associated with suburban development combined with a more widespread unrest amongst London workers to boost trade union organisation. (43)

Building operatives in London had suffered in the preceding period, from the fact that public works were often allocated to "underpaid firms". Building trade unions in the metropolis had not previously been strong, but moves to extend organisation during 1890-91 were combined with representation over unfair wages, piece rates and sub-contracting. (44) The increased travelling time associated with London's suburban development often meant that, in practice, the working day was lengthened, and at a time when the question of the eight hour day was receiving wide acclaim within the labour movement a reduction in the length of the working day was a high priority for building workers (45). It was the carpenters and joiners who were at the forefront of this move to improve conditions. A United Trades Committee was formed in London, bringing together the Amalgamated Society, and the General Union and smaller societies, and notice was submitted to the employers of a demand for 10d per hour and a 47 hour week, to come into effect in May 1891. The employers failed to respond to this demand and consequently the men struck work on three large firms from that date. The employers retaliated with a lock-out affecting around 80 firms, and over 3,000 men. (46) The dispute had clear implications for other trades in London, in that a defeat for the carpenters would weaken a move for improvements in the conditions of other workers and financial support was proffered as a means of strengthening the stand

which had been made. (47) The dispute was a long and bitter one and every effort was made by the employers to intimidate the strikers. Attempts were made to bring in blacklegs, from overseas as well as from the provinces. Large numbers of police confronted pickets and men were encouraged to pledge themselves not to join a trade union (48). After twenty six weeks the matter was referred to the Royal Institute of British Architects for arbitration. The Master Builders argued from the outset that whatever decision was reached in regard to the carpenters and joiners should also be applicable to the other trades, so that the dispute should not be revived during the following year, since it was known that the other trades were planning to submit demands similar to those currently under consideration. (49) The award, which was announced on Nov 19 1891 conceded the claim for a reduction in working hours in view of the 'abnormal size' of London and the great distances which workmen were obliged to travel. The working week was reduced to  $51\frac{3}{4}$  hours for 36 weeks in summer and to 47 for 16 weeks in the winter, an average of 50 hours per week.

But on wages there was no concession, with the standard rate of wages maintained at 9d per hour, with a provision for higher rates for overtime where this was worked at the request of the employers. (50) The award met with disapproval from the London Building Trades, especially in view of the satisfactory state of trade which prevailed. Demands for a building trade federation were a direct outcome of the experience of the strike and disillusionment with the award of the arbitrator. An improved organisation was necessary, it was argued, in order to obtain more reasonable terms at an early

date, and the London Building Trades Federation was brought into being in 1892 for this purpose. (51) Communication between the London building trades had previously been maintained by a Building Trades Committee, but the LBTF was established with the more ambitious object of securing 'unity of action amongst the various organisations connected with the building trade and to raise funds which shall be available... to assist any trade connected with the Federation.' (52)

This new militancy was matched by an extension of trade union organisation in building during the 1890's. Membership of the major trade societies grew significantly during this decade and far from being 'years of silence and mental stagnation' as represented in Postgate's gloomy account, they were years of steady expansion which laid the basis for subsequent discussions on structural change. (53) Just as the trade union movement more generally found a new base within parts of London where organisation had previously been limited, so the building trades unions consolidated their hold in the capital. The GUC&J, which was centred on the North and North West of England made rapid gains in the South, and especially in London, from 1889. Recruiting took place in the developing suburbs, with branches established in such areas as Hackney, Hoxton, Islington, Hammersmith and West Ham, as well as in the city and central areas. Branches of the OBS were opened in Brixton (1890), Edmonton (1889), Enfield (1890), Hornsey (1890), Kilburn (1890), Kingston (1891), Lewisham (1891), Norwood (1891), Stoke Newington (1891), Woodford (1890), Walthamstow (1890) and many areas outside of London (54). The number of branches in the Amalg. Soc. of House Decorators and Painters, whose membership was located predominantly in the South, increased

from 24 in 1889 to 41 in 1890 and 86 by 1893 (55). The leadership of the craft societies may have suffered from the conservatism which Postgate has depicted, but at the grass-roots they were informed by a buoyancy which inspired a reappraisal by the employers of their own aims and methods.

The London lock-out of carpenters and joiners in 1891 was followed just a year later by another campaign for improved wages and conditions by the other building crafts, which lead to an increase of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d an hour and a further reduction in hours (56). But the working rule agreement which was signed at this time was subjected to discussions in the middle of the decade when a temporary recession in trade encouraged attempts by the employers to introduce a 'disability clause', stating that no workman should be placed under a disability by reason of being or not being a member of a trade society, and that no objection should be raised to sub-contracting work, provided that other rules were observed. (57) The situation was complicated by a breakdown in the unity which had been maintained previously by the trades affiliated to the LBTF. The bricklayers broke off from other trades and accepted the disability clause, together with a  $\frac{1}{2}$ d an hour increase, whilst the ASC&J called for strike action, and the GUC&J for a ballot of the membership (58).

From the ensuing disunity on the trade union side emerged the basis for a new form of relationship with the employers. Whereas they had previously insisted on receiving representatives of the non-society men, as well as of trade unionists, within deputations, in 1896 they accepted for the first time the rights of trade union officials to represent their

members and to negotiate on their behalf (59). Procedure was established which allowed for the reference of issues concerning objections to the employment of particular workmen to a Board of Conciliation and it was announced that 'the Master Builders Association, in London, will not in future look upon the Officials of our Organisations as firebrands or promoters of strikes etc., and that they will not have cause to regret the new departure they have made in dealing exclusively with the Representatives of Societies.'

(60)

It was not for another decade that procedure was to be clearly set out for the resolution of disputes which involved negotiation up to and including the national level. Craft controls continued to be a matter of local concern, as employers and operatives battled over the admission of apprentices and learners at a time when booming conditions stimulated the demand for labour. When in 1898 the National Association of Master Builders circularised its members to ascertain the extent of such controls, it became evident that the majority of respondents had experience of such restrictions operating in their locality, and in some cases these were confirmed through the working rule agreement (61). A counter-attack by the employers on the gains made by labour was apparent by the end of the 1890's, both in the industrial and in the juridical field (62).

Building employers were prominent in the legal cases pursued during that decade, for the law seemed to offer a method of limiting the extension of trade union strength, by

restricting the controls which the craft societies applied.

(63) In the case of *Temperton v. Russell* for example a civil action for damages was taken against a committee of trade unions in Hull by a supplier, Temperton, who had refused to comply with the union request to cease supplying an employer with whom they were in dispute. The Court of Appeal found in favour of Temperton and against the unions who were held liable for damages. And in 1895, in the case of *Trollope v. the London Building Trades Federation* the publication of 'black lists' of non-union firms was held to be actionable. Judicial hostility to picketing was apparent in a number of cases which were heard in the same period. The case of *Charnock v. Court* was one which involved building trades operatives. A firm of master joiners in Halifax had brought over some Irish men during a strike to blackleg. They were approached by the strikers with a request that they should not do so, and for this action the strikers were found guilty of watching and besetting. (64)

The stage was set for an industrial counter-attack by the employers which culminated in the defeat of the ASE in the engineering lock-out of 1897. Amongst the building employers it was the National Association of Plasterers which was singled out for attention. From the late 1890's there was a growing concern by the employers with what was regarded as the increasing arrogance of union representatives. A system of regional organisation was developing, following the foundation of the Lancashire Fed. of Building Trades Employers in 1894 (65). When the conflict with the National Association of Plasterers broke in London in 1898 the new regional federations of employers supported the London employers, demanding

the end of restrictive practices including an end to the limitation of apprentices. It was the EC of the ASC&J which moved to bring all of the trades together in response to the crisis facing the plasterers and 'to the great astonishment of all concerned, all the unions except the Stonemasons were represented, constituting a gathering such as had not been seen in the memory of living man' (66). Although there was a lack of unanimity on the tactics to be adopted in the face of the employers' aggression, the united front was maintained and a rare occurrence, the trades were jointly represented at national level in meetings with the employers. Mr. Matkin of the GUC&J, Mr. Wilson of the ASC&J and John Batchelor of the OBS were elected as representatives of the operatives and were instructed to put the case for Boards of Conciliation as a means of resolving disputes (67). The central control of the EC of each society over the actions and commitments of its own members had always been qualified by the fact that a dispute in any related trade might involve their own members, through the extension of that dispute across trades. This could happen in a number of ways. Firstly it was possible that joint action might be agreed by the trades at local level; secondly it was likely that action by one trade would disrupt production and cause lay-offs in another. Finally the employers might agree to escalate a dispute across trade boundaries. One section of the industry had the power, at least potentially, to disrupt the work of others, and it was this power which concerned the leaders of the craft societies. They had no desire to take on the conflicts of other sections of building trades operatives, especially where these were heightened as the result of a forceful intervention by one particular general secretary, as seems to have been the case in the plasterers'

dispute (68). This was particularly true of the ASC&J, the most powerful of the craft societies, and the natural protector for any small trade organisation in building which might be involved in a dispute. It was in the interests of the leaders of all the trades, but especially the ASC&J, to establish a procedure which exempted them from involvement in the disputes of their craft brothers whilst ensuring that they did not suffer too much as a result. It was for this reason that their response, in the plasterers' dispute, was to advocate the establishment of Conciliation Boards as a means of processing grievances. The proposal did not meet with the employers' approval, since it failed to provide them with a monetary guarantee against a breach of procedure by trade union members. But if the national conciliation procedure was not pursued, neither was the national lock-out which had been threatened. Craft controls remained a central concern for both employers and operatives, pending the formulation of a new structure regulating their relations.

By 1901 the employers' organisation was reconstituted to take account of proposals for organisation across trade lines. A new scheme was formally accepted in that year and the name of the association was changed to the National Federation of Building Trades Employers. By dropping the words 'Master Builder' from its title, the rights of the associated building trades to be included in the membership of the Federation were tacitly recognised. Representatives from employers' organisations in plastering, plumbing and slating and tiling were included in regional and local Federations, and the Master Painters too expressed an interest in affiliation. These bodies were to retain their independence on matters which affected them alone, but drew on the Federation for

issues which were of wider concern. The new organisation was broader in scope and larger in membership than its predecessor. It provided the basis for new initiatives on the regulation of relations between employers and operatives at a time when the capacity of the unions to defend their members was seriously eroded. (69)

The decade 1901-1910 was one of high unemployment and chronic insecurity for the building operative. As the building boom broke, so did opportunities for employment. The percentage of carpenters and plumbers who were unemployed rose steadily from 1.8% in July 1900 for both trades to 6.5% and 10.1% respectively in July 1905, falling to 5.0% and 8.8% in July 1907 but rising thereafter to reach 10.0% and 14.6% in the same month in 1909. (70) Membership of all of the unions was cut back by this trend, with the figure for the ASC&J declining from 61,222 in 1901 to 43,347 in 1910 and for the Plumbing Trades Union from 11,089 to 10,870 over the same period. (71) Postgate asserts that the period was one of declining wages and longer hours imposed by the employers, but this view has been questioned by Clegg who argues that wage reductions affected no more than 1% of the labour force in any one year and that worse conditions had not been accepted by the unions. (72)

The employers, he argued, did not attempt to take advantage of the insecurity of the operatives by undermining wages and conditions. Their genuine desire for peace led to initiatives which resulted in the establishment of conciliation machinery for the industry in 1905. Clegg's account seems to be based essentially on data for the earlier part of the decade. The

Report of Changes in rates of wages and hours of labour in 1908 (73) suggests that there were net increases in wages during the period 1899 - 1903, but that during the years 1904-6 the changes resulted in net decreases. During 1908 there was again a net advance, but the total number of workers whose wages were changed represented only 1% of all building trades operatives. During 1909 there was again an over-all decrease, but during 1910 wage rates increased slightly, although the increases affected only 0.5% of the total number of building operatives employed (74).

Three factors must be taken into account in an estimate of the conflicting views expressed on the situation of building operatives during the first decade of the century. Firstly it should be recognised that official estimates deal on the whole with wage rates rather than with earnings. No estimate is made of the effects on earnings of unemployment and under-employment which was a serious problem during this decade. It has been noted that the casual nature of employment in building production makes it difficult to estimate annual earnings (75) and although allowance is made for seasonal variations in hours worked in the 1906 Wages Survey, estimates of earnings are based in all cases on the number of hours constituting a full working week, and do not therefore represent a close approximation to actual earnings. Secondly it seems likely that overtime, although officially discouraged by the unions, represented a component of earnings for many workers and one which would be less reliable in a period of depression. Finally, account must be taken of the regional variation in experience which was characteristic of the building trades. In 1908 for example, when a net increase in wage rates was reported over-all affecting 1% of all

operatives, over half those receiving the increase were located in the Liverpool and Birkenhead District and all of the remainder were situated in the North or North-West of England. And in 1910 the only improvement to wages and conditions outside of this area took place in Swansea (76). In view of the decline in building activity already noted in London it is not surprising if Postgate's assessment of the trend during this decade could be upheld for the London area and the South-East, where it seems that wages remained stagnant during a period of rising prices. And by contrast a more buoyant situation seems apparent in the North, especially in Lancashire and Cheshire, where real improvements were won.

This variation in the regional situation throws an interesting light on the formation of the conciliation machinery over the period 1904-5. Interestingly it was the Lancashire and Cheshire Federation, cited by Clegg as the group of employers most determined to show a 'united nation-wide front to the (trade) societies' (77) who pioneered the procedures for the Conciliation Boards (78). An interest in conciliation had been apparent in other industries in earlier years, where employers were faced with a strong and effective trade union organisation which could expect to make gains through industrial action. In this context employers were motivated to establish procedures which minimised disruptive actions and processed union claims in a context where employer influence could be brought to bear on union leaders for moderation. In the building trades it seems, the same processes were at work. The Lancashire and Cheshire Conciliation Board was formed early in the century and laid the basis for conciliation machinery for the whole of the Northern Counties. Following their example, similar

Conciliation Boards were set up for other regions. The machinery laid down that disputes were to be handled in the first instance by local joint standing committees of the craft concerned. At the next stage they moved to a local joint board of all the crafts and, if unresolved at this level they were referred to a Regional Conciliation Board, and finally to a National Conciliation Board (79). At every stage, local, regional and national, employers and operatives were represented in equal numbers, and it is not then surprising that on issues involving a major conflict of interests, resolution of a problem was unlikely. The building trades, more than many other areas of employment, relied on the immediacy of their action when striking as a means of bringing pressure to bear on the employers. Trade movements were timed to come into effect in the Spring, when a seasonal upturn in activity could be expected and the impact of any action would be at its greatest. The effects of conciliation machinery were to delay consideration of issues, postponing decisions sometimes until after the moment when industrial action could be most effective.

Conciliation Boards were brought into being for the whole of England & Wales with the exception of London, which had its own scheme. Not all of the trades were included in the main scheme, for the Plasterers, Plumbers and Painters made separate agreements with their own master craftsmen, whilst the National Conciliation Board did not embrace the labourers. Whilst the Conciliation Boards tended to operate to the advantage of the employers, there were clear advantages for the trade union leaders. Firstly participation in conciliation confirmed their, sometimes dubious position as representatives of the operatives, in a role which was recognised by the employers.

Secondly, the scheme reduced the possibility of strikes at a time when union finances had been seriously eroded by a decline in membership. Demarcation disputes, which had been a regular feature of the previous decade, could now, very often, be resolved through the Conciliation Boards, whilst it seemed that the bitter conflict which had been expected could now be avoided. Insofar as union members had an obligation to refer issues in dispute through the conciliation machinery the control of union leaders over their own members was heightened, since even where the sanction of a union EC was not essential prior to industrial action being taken, observation of established conciliation procedures was now expected. But if the scheme was acceptable to many trade union leaders, it was by no means uniformly approved by the members. Opposition to the Conciliation Boards was not pronounced at the time when they were established (80) but it seems to have escalated during the years preceding the outbreak of the Great War, perhaps because experience of the scheme had taught workers that it did not operate in their interests, but perhaps too because the improved situation of labour as unemployment declined after 1911 encouraged the belief that the established framework posed too many constraints on the possibility of improvement in the operatives' conditions of employment.

The effects of conciliation, insofar as trade union organisation was concerned, was to encourage inter-craft contacts at every level of union activities. Building unions were already drawn together in some localities by Federations which provided a medium for participation in joint organisation and action in a particular town or city. The establishment of Conciliation Boards necessitated the consolidation of these inter-union

links, since representatives of the various crafts were now drawn together as the trade union side of the Conciliation Board, at regional and national, as well as at local level. Secondly the Conciliation Machinery set out for the first time a procedure for contacts between employers and unions at national level. In doing so it broke with past practices which centred on the locality and where, only through extraordinary measures, could representatives from the national level on either side come directly into contact with one another.

Trade union government in the building craft societies,  
pre-1914

The building craft unions, prior to 1914, had not moved on significantly from the stage of development described by the Webbs as 'primitive democracy'. (81) Members, being qualified craftsmen or at least capable of commanding the wage rate paid to craftsmen were recruited to the local branch or lodge which formed the basic unit of organisation in each town or locality. It was there that contributions were paid, and each branch was responsible for distributing and accounting for the benefits which were paid out. Lodges had a considerable measure of autonomy in the conduct of local trade affairs and were entitled to maintain funds of their own in most cases. (82)

Where there were two or more branches in a district a Management Committee might be formed for the purpose of conducting and carrying out local rules (see above). And where there was more than one society recruiting in the same trade, a United Trades Committee could be formed, including representatives of the different societies to deal with the management of trade affairs.

Policy making was the prerogative of a general or aggregate meeting - the General Council in the case of the ASC&J, the GUC&J and the NAS of H&SP&D (83) and the Annual Moveable General Council in the case of the OBS (84). The General Council would meet every year or every other year, and was empowered to consider the rules of its society, and to give decisions on issues which may have been referred to them by their Executive Council or on other issues affecting the working of their society on which the rules were not explicit. Its representation was generally organised according to district or region, and in the case of the ASC&J, which had members overseas, places were reserved for members from the USA, from Canada, Australasia and South Africa. (85) The ultimate power was accorded to the General Council to suspend the EC from office and to arrange for government of the society on an interim basis in the event of unsatisfactory behaviour by the EC. In between meetings of the General Council policy questions might be submitted to the members of the societies for decision by a ballot vote, taken within the branches.

General control of the societies would be vested with the EC in each case, although the powers and responsibilities of the EC varied from one organisation to another. In the ASC&J the EC were empowered to transact the ordinary business of the society, but not to alter its rules. They were under the control of the GC and on a request from that body they were to hand over books and money which was within their control. They could grant payment of benefits and trade privileges, but they could not take part in conferences with the employers without first informing and consulting the members who were responsible for

the observation of district rules. (86) In other societies the responsibilities of the EC were defined primarily in administrative terms, with reference to office arrangements, to contact with other societies and to the interpretation, although not the alteration of rules. The Webbs, writing in 1897 noted the conflict which prevailed between the centralisation of finance (in accordance with the 'amalgamated' principles which had governed the formation of the ASC&J in 1860, following the example of the ASE) and the surviving local autonomy of the branches. Within the ASC&J, which was more centralised than the other societies, branches required the sanction of the EC before strike action might be taken and trade privileges accorded. But in other societies the rules were less clear. In the OBS the right to strike without the prior sanction of the EC depended on whether the strike was in defence of existing conditions - where strike action might legitimately be taken - or as part of a forward movement on wages and conditions, when the sanction of the EC would be required. (87) But the EC had the power to visit a district where strike action was pending, to make suggestions regarding the dispute. They had the power to arrange for delegations to visit to regulate and direct such strikes and:

"The EC shall have power at any time to settle any strike in any way it thinks fit after a conference with the branch or branches affected, and shall have power to order any branch secretary or treasurer to cease payment of turn-out benefit to any member or members..." (88)

The authority of the EC was considerable.

Different arrangements prevailed within the OSM where the rules derived from an earlier and less centralised administrative

structure. In this case major issues of any kind, including the right to pursue disputes with employers, were subject to a ballot vote of all the membership, rather than being submitted to the authority of the EC for decision. And although the EC did have the power to investigate disputes which were in progress, the authority for ending them rested with the GC (89). But in the NASOH&SP&D arrangements followed the pattern established by the ASC&J. Hence the EC was responsible - for the interpretation of the rules, under the authority of the GC. They controlled the union's funds and had the power to initiate legal proceedings on behalf of the society as well as to grant benefits and payments for trade privileges (90). The trend was towards the centralisation of power in the hands of the Executive in most cases, especially in respect of the authority to initiate and to close trade disputes.

The building trades societies had by no means abandoned the rotating general office which was characteristic of 'primitive democracy'. It is true that the ASC&J, like the ASE had fixed the location of its central office building (91), but its example had not been followed by others of the craft societies, where the practice was retained of moving the seat of government to the area where membership of that society was at its highest. Not un-naturally this led to altercations about the level and density of membership in particular regions, the more acute because members in the area around the general office generally held the privilege of nominating or electing the Executive Council for the whole society. The EC of the GUC&J, which consisted of five members (excluding the President) was elected by lodges situated within a 20 mile-radius from the centre of the town in which the general office was situated (92). The seven member EC of the NASOH&SP&D was elected by the members of the

society from candidates nominated by branches within a 50 mile radius of the general office.

And even in the ASC&J, with its headquarters fixed in Manchester the seven man EC was nominated from and elected by branches within a 50 mile radius of the general office. (93)

None of the building unions had adopted the 'administrative efficiency' advocated by the Webbs, with the appointment of chief officers and key officials. In each case the General Secretary and the Assistant General Secretary or the General President were subject to election and regular re-election by the whole of the society. The incumbent, in this situation took up full-time office in the service of his society, and as one of the only full-time officials he would be in a position of considerable influence and power. It is not surprising that Postgate, in writing his classic Builders History devoted so much attention to the men who held office as general secretary in the various organisations. Their commitment to their work and their outlook, as well as their capacity to adapt to office routine were influential factors for the policies, as well as the administrative practices of different periods. Men such as Robert Applegarth and Edwin Coulson, or John Batchelor and George Hicks at a later date, seemed to personify the organisational developments of their own period in office. And although it might be argued that Postgate exaggerated the importance of these leaders at particular moments (94), it is nonetheless reasonable to maintain that the general secretary of each union, one of the few full-time employees at central level, wielded considerable power within his own organisation. In no case within the building unions before 1914 was there an Executive Council which was paid by the union on a full-time

basis. Union Executives were elected from a relatively small district precisely because of the problem of maintaining a regular contact, but even so they met only intermittently - perhaps monthly - and they could not hope to retain day to day control over affairs at their own general office.

Whilst full-time officers were elected within the building unions from the 1890's, they were few in number at national level. The ASC&J had six national full-time officials by 1895, the GUC&J had only one, who had been in office since 1892. The OBS had only two national organisers by 1914 and their functions, judging by their reports, seem to have been more concerned with the detail of organising in areas where the society was weak, than with organising the society's affairs at national level.

(95) The casual basis of employment and the geographical mobility of building labour meant that the recruitment and retention of trade union members was a difficult task, and one which could not easily be tackled in the absence of organisers who were paid for that purpose. In the better organised localities where funds could be sustained for the purpose a 'walking delegate' might be retained as a local organiser, responsible for boosting membership, especially on new sites. Even the local trade societies might have a walking delegate as is shown by the closure of the 'Mersey Society' of Ship Joiners, a body which claimed some 200 members in 1900. The ASC&J and the GUC&J were in competition for the membership of the 'Mersey Society' but the ASC&J 'adept in the art of trickery' took over their walking delegate as a means to recruiting their members. (96) The walking delegate was then an important figure in the better organised areas, particularly where within one locality there were sufficient members to sustain finance for such an organiser. But at national level

by contrast, there were few organisers, and their responsibilities were directed towards those regions which could not help themselves in this way.

Despite the extension in the authority of the National Executive Council and the General Secretary, there was considerable independence in the conduct of affairs at local level. Branches were controlled by their own branch officers, who were subject to regular re-election. Branch secretaries received and conducted correspondence on behalf of the branch, sent out notices of meetings, kept membership records and sent reports to head office. It was they who dealt with the payment of benefits, although the branch treasurer was responsible for handling finances. A branch president presided over meetings, assisted by the door-keeper who dealt with the admission of members. Sick-stewards were elected by the branch to visit members in receipt of sick benefit and to arrange for payment to be made (97).

One of the most important functions of the union, at the local level, was the settlement of wages and conditions. Since it was there that bargaining was conducted, it remained under the control of branch committees or district/Management Committees in areas with more than one branch under the same code of working rules. The Management or District Committee were elected by and directly responsible to the members in their district. They might consult with specially summoned meetings of the members to consider matters affecting wages and working conditions and it was their responsibility to deal with any violation of the working rules in the District (98). Based in the locality for which they were elected, their influence rested on their understanding of the local situation and their direct contact with

the membership. Like the District Committees within the ASE, it was intended that Management/District Committees should provide for representation of all of the branches in the locality although Committee members were not responsible for the conduct of branch affairs. (99) Only in the case of the OSM where the lodge remained central to the workings of the Society, was there no provision for a Committee of this kind (100). But in other societies these Committees were central to the operation of local agreements. The strengthened central authority of the EC was matched at this level by a body which could lead and direct local initiatives. Particularly in the larger, industrial centres the measure of local autonomy was reflected in the strength and autonomy of the District or Management Committees.

The application of one descriptive phrase cannot adequately convey the variation in the scope and complexity of government within the craft societies in building, and attention has been given here only to a few of the major organisations which were in existence at the beginning of the present century as a means of conveying the extent to which these bodies were marked by 'primitive democracy'. The defining features noted by the Webbs in relation to this level of government were the existence of the general or aggregate meeting in which delegation rather than representation was the rule; the provision for a referendum; arrangements for the rotation of office and for the election of officers. On all of these counts the building trades unions had not moved far from the 'primitive democracy' in which they had their roots. If a trend towards the centralisation of authority can be identified - for example in the requirement that the EC give prior approval before strike action is taken, it met, in practice, with resistance from the local units of organisation, from branches or from Management Committees, which retained a

considerable measure of autonomy in their control of affairs. Their right to control their own finance and their own organisers lent them a power which had not been seriously undermined. For one writer at least, the Management Committee seemed to provide the basis for government:

'There must be government in all Society -  
Bees have their queen, and stag herds have their leader;  
Rome had her Consuls, Athens had her Archons,  
And we sir, have our Managing Committee' (101)

Local initiatives were encouraged by the foundation of local federations intended to foster unity between trades within the district. The Webbs commented in 1897 that such bodies had been set up in most towns as a means of co-ordinating action between branches against their common employers since wages and conditions would be subject to the same, or to similar fluctuations. (102) The London Building Trades Federation was the most effective example for it was established on the basis of local funding, independent of the national Executives of the affiliated unions. Its 1894 rulebook stated that

"The object of the Federation shall be to secure unity of action amongst the various organisations connected with the building trade and to raise funds which shall be available.. to assist any trade connected with the Federation which may become involved in resisting any aggression on the part of their employers or in endeavouring to improve their social position..."

Similarly in Manchester the Manchester, Salford and District Building Industries Federation, founded in 1893 provided that the objects of Federation were to:

"Promote the federation, amalgamation, joint action and co-operation of the Trade Unions existing in the Building Industry. To deputise employers and trade unions in the Building Industry regarding any matter likely to lead to a withdrawal or lock-out of members." (103)

Like the London Federation, there was provision for independent local funding, but in other areas funds seem to have accumulated, where they existed at all, only during periods of trade disputes (104).

Independent funding was unlikely to be encouraged by union leaders, whether General Secretaries or Executive Members, since it challenged their prerogative to give financial support in a trade dispute and thereby to control, in some measure, the capacity of their own members to take industrial action.

#### Structural change and the building unions before 1914

During the decade preceding the outbreak of the first world war the question of structural change featured prominently amongst the issues which were of concern to trade unionists. The 'new unionism' had challenged established assumptions about the form and objects of trade union organisation, with implications for craftsmen as well as for unskilled workers. (105) The counter-offensive which was launched by the employers during the decade of the 1890's, and which culminated in the engineering lock-out of 1897 and the Taff Vale Judgement made in connection with a dispute involving members of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, stimulated this interest in novel organisational forms. The question of working class unity was posed with a new urgency since

'It is evident the employing class have learned all we had to

teach on the question of organisation and have gone one better by federating their combination against any section of workmen when it suits their purpose' (106)

It was in this climate that proposals were brought forward for a General Federation of Trade Unions, a scheme which was first mooted by socialists connected with the Clarion newspaper. Within the building trades there were proposals for a National Building Trades Federation. A union of Building Trades Federations was initiated in 1899-1900, but its existence was short-lived.

The idea of Federation was taken up by the TUC in 1897 and just over a year later the GFTU was brought into being to provide funds for mutual financial support between trades in the event of disputes. (107) The Labour Representation Committee which was established in 1900 also grew out of this move towards closer unity as a defensive measure and it is not surprising if, in different areas of employment, attention was given to schemes in which unions might consolidate their forces, drawing together for mutual protection.

The improvements made to the employers' organisation in building spelled out to trade unionists in that sector the need for closer co-operation, if not for amalgamation. There were no doubts that the employers were preparing themselves for a confrontation but:

'whilst the employers are getting themselves combined, the workers are not doing the same sufficiently to successfully withstand any serious and combined attack upon the workers in the building industry'. (108)

It was known that the employers were determined to end the restrictions which were operated by the building unions.

When the Lancashire, Cheshire and North Wales Building Trades Employers proposed a uniform date for the expiration of notices it was felt that the clash might be imminent.

'They have fairly organised their Federation now and are prepared to deal with any emergency... they have been perfecting their organisation for the past 10 years, they are now prepared to deal with such matters.' (109)

The defeats in engineering, as well as their own threatened conflict in 1899 convinced leaders of the various building unions of the advantages of closer co-operation. Discussions on this topic were pursued within all of the major craft societies from the beginning of the century. Although the overt conflict which was expected did not take place, rationalisation was part of the tactical response to improvements in the employers' organisation and to the wider experience of the employers' counter-offensive.

#### Structural change and the bricklayers' societies, 1900-1910

The two major organisations recruiting bricklayers were the OBS, with a membership of 38,830 in 1900 and the Manchester Unity Operative Bricklayers, which claimed some 3,438 members in the same year. Although there was such a large difference in membership of the two unions, the presence of a rival society recruiting in the same trade was an irritant for members of the OBS and an unproductive competition was sustained between the two. The prevailing attitude within the OBS in respect of this problem was reflected in a comment by the GS in 1892.

"The action of the Manchester Order during the past two or three years shows that they exercised very little power in the trade for good, and it remains for the members to decide whether two societies shall be maintained with all the concomitant friction, to do work which could better be done by one." (110) The "petty tyranny" of the MUOB inhibited progress in this direction, but in 1900 proposals on amalgamation were revived.

The MUOB was no more receptive to moves on amalgamation in 1900 than it had been in earlier years. Proposals from the OBS that the matter should be considered were received by the GS of the MUOB with a refusal to put the matter to a vote of his members. (111) It was difficult for further moves to be made in the face of this adamant refusal by the leadership of the MUOB to give consideration to the question. (112) It was not the differences in detail which made progress impossible, for negotiations never reached the stage where such differences could be elucidated. Rather it was the resistance of the general secretary of the MUOB, G.H. Clarke, to discussion of proposals which if they reached fruition would eliminate his society, and along with it his own position. The MUOB was too small for its general secretary to be able to expect special consideration in a merger with the OBS. A 'take-over' implied the absorption of the membership of the MUOB into the larger society, but there was no place which could be accorded to G.H. Clarke within that body which compared to the one which he currently held. In the meantime discussions were pursued more successfully with the Glasgow Operative Bricklayers Society and the Belfast Bricklayers and agreement on amalgamation with the former group was reached in 1901 (113). But this did nothing to advance negotiations with the MUOB when approaches were revived in 1908.

On this occasion it is true, the question did reach a delegate meeting of the smaller society where amalgamation was promptly rejected by a vote of 16 against to 8 in favour. (114) Again it seemed that the prospects for merger had been ended before ever being put to the membership of the smaller society. But Batchelor, G.S. of the OBS persisted in attempts to have the matter considered by the members of the MUOB, and by September 1909 George Clarke agreed to publish his letters in the Monthly Journal of the MUOB and leave it to the members to comment upon them. In view of the disinclination of their leaders to present a case for amalgamation with the OBS, it is not surprising if members of the MUOB were not filled with enthusiasm at the prospect.

It was at this point that differences in the detail of operations of the two societies had some bearing on the question of merger. A conference was held between the Executives of the two unions in May 1910 when consideration was given to the value and benefits of both of them. The OBS, which declared its membership at that time to be 25,008 with a general fund of £69,884.6.3½ had a value per member of £2.15.10½, with a reserve for superannuation of £9.055.16.4. The MUOB at that point claimed a membership of 1,769, with total assets of £4,169.15.3½, or £2.6.10½ per member. It was suggested that the terms of amalgamation be the payment of £2.15.10½ per member, and that on payment of that sum, the members of the MUOB would become entitled to all OBS benefits. The deficiency was to be paid, it was proposed, during the 12 months from June 1910. If a member should become entitled to any benefit during that period the contributions still outstanding were to be deducted from any benefits which were paid. Members of the MUOB were to be entitled to the lowest scale of

superannuation benefit, that was, for 15 years membership, provided that they had been in membership of the MUOB for that time. (115) George Clarke risked nothing in proposing such terms to his members. By revealing the details of the OBS project he transferred the responsibility for rejecting them to his own members. It was, as Richard Coppock, a young member of the OBS declared, 'an impossible basis for amalgamation.' (116) Members of the MUOB were unlikely to welcome transfer to the larger organisation on terms which laid on them a heavy responsibility for additional contributions. When the question was put to them in a ballot, the proposals were decisively rejected, with only 25% of those voting giving their approval to the scheme. (117)

The amalgamation of the two major bricklayers societies during the decade 1900-1910 was precluded, firstly because of the hostility of the GS of the smaller of the two unions to the scheme. Considerations of their personal position and prestige were likely to affect Executive Council members, as well as the GS of that union, although Clarke, as GS, was the only full-time official. So that there was no division in outlook between the GS and the EC, since both were inclined to oppose the merger. When Batchelor's persistent approaches led to a more detailed consideration of the basis on which merger might be carried out, it was clear that the members too might be disadvantaged in an amalgamation where their society had a lower per capita value than the OBS. The onus which it seemed would lay on them to raise their value by 9/- per member was unlikely to appeal to men who had already established their standing and their entitlement to benefit as members of the smaller body. Amalgamation was not, in consequence, likely to proceed.

### The woodworkers

The relative size of the two unions recruiting carpenters and joiners was roughly equivalent to that of the two bricklayers' unions. The ASC&J, as the larger, had 60,264 members in 1900 compared with 7,727 in the GUC&J. But the picture was complicated by the presence of craft societies for other areas, for example the Associated Carpenters and Joiners Society of Scotland (AC&JS) with 9,808 members. Unions recruiting amongst kindred trades might rival the two main societies of carpenters and joiners in particular instances - bodies such as the Mill Sawyers, Woodcutting Machinists and Wood Turners Society (ASWM), later the Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists, which although still small (4,179 members in 1900) had a firm basis for growth amongst workers on the new woodworking machines; and in the furniture trades the National Amalgamated Furniture Trades Association and the Cabinet Makers Union with 6,248 members (1902) and 2,452 members (1900).

Although it has been suggested that where two unions were based on recruitment amongst the same class of craftsman common policies may be evolved (118), the rivalry between the ASC&J and the GUC&J was on occasion both intense and bitter. The two unions were in competition for members and both sides were guilty at times, of misrepresenting the financial position and policies of its rival (119), in order to boost its own membership. It is true that they co-operated in United Trades Committees in many areas, but the larger size of the Amalgamated often meant that its members could declare a trade policy without reference to members of the General Union in their area. Where the smaller society refused to accept trade policies set down by the ASC&J, existing tensions between the two were heightened by accusations of blacklegging (120). It was sometimes argued

by members of the ASC&J that the General Union recruited amongst workers who could not truly regard themselves as craftsmen. The motivation for this allegation lay in the existence within the GUC&J from around 1890 of a section for trade benefits alone and it was on this basis that the membership of the GUC&J was expanded during the 1890's. (121) For the craft member of the Amalgamated Society the recruitment of trade-only members suggested a break-down in the exclusivity of the craft organisation and this innovation in the administrative arrangements of the General Union conflicted with the restricted admission which operated within the Amalgamated.

The leaders of the ASC&J endeavoured for many years to take over the smaller GUC&J. When in 1901 the master builders consolidated their organisation through the new National Federation of Building Trades Employees, initiatives were taken again in this direction, and it was agreed in 1902 that talks should take place between the ASC&J, the GUC&J and the AC&JS on the subject of amalgamation (122). Leaders of the General Union argued from the outset that merger could only be realised if it was based on a reformulation of the rules of all of the societies, and the construction of one, united association (123). Their concern was based on the lack of provision within the ASC&J rulebook for trade-only members. It seems likely that there would be a measure of resistance to 'take-over' by the ASC&J in accordance with the rulebook of that body, but advocates of amalgamation within the General Union had also to confront the problem of their trade section which could not readily be assimilated on the basis of the ASC&J rules. Negotiations were complicated by the involvement of the AC&JS, whose representatives seemed ready to accept the ASC&J rulebook as the basis

for amalgamation and at the end of August 1902 the successful conclusion of the discussions on this basis between these two bodies was announced to Matkin, GS of the General Union. Further progress in the talks between the ASC&J and the GUC&J seemed unlikely after this, (124) for Matkin could not accept a merger which made no provision for his trade only members. Discussions were pursued for another two months, but with little likelihood of success. In fact the agreed amalgamation of the AC&JS into the ASC&J was not followed through and this round of talks was ended with no significant change in the prevailing structure.

When the question was revived only two years later, the leaders of the ASC&J proved more flexible in their approach. A conference was held in Carlisle in 1904 involving the three societies who had been present in the earlier talks, and on this occasion it was conceded that features of the GUC&J Rulebook - and particularly the trade section, must be included in the consolidated organisation (125). Consequently it was possible to put the proposals before the membership, who gave them overwhelming support.

Voting on amalgamation of the woodworking trade unions, 1904.

	For	Against	Members 1903	% Members Voting
Amalg.Soc. Carpenters & Joiners	24,990	1,742	62,364	42.9%
GUC&J	2,290	1,285	6,566	54.4%
AC&JS	4,988	1,401	8,659	73.8%

In this case the factor hindering amalgamation derived not so much from a reluctance on the part of leaders or members of the respective unions to accept the principles involved. Rather

it related to the statutory provisions governing amalgamation which required that amalgamation of two or more unions could take place only if the consent were given of not less than two thirds of the total membership of each or every union (127). Clearly the majority of members who had voted had given their assent to the proposals, but, as Postgate suggests, the non-voters who represented a large 'neutral' poll invalidated any further movement in the direction of merger.

Following this setback the ASC&J entered into talks with kindred societies, including the Cabinet Makers Union, the Scottish Saw Mill Operatives and Woodcutting Machinemen's Society, the Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists and the NAFTA, with a view to a consolidation of forces. (128) There was a widespread resistance to 'absorption into the ASC&J' (129) although there was a general agreement on the need for closer co-operation between the various woodworking unions. The growing tendency for the better class of carpentry to be undertaken by cabinet and house-furnishing firms, as woodworking machinery made inroads into the operations usually undertaken by the woodworking craftsman combined with a growth in the number of demarcation disputes to encourage moves towards a closer union. One proposal from a representative of the ASWM<sup>for</sup> a scheme for a national federation of woodworking unions was unanimously accepted and by August 1907 all of the societies had agreed to send delegates to the first meeting of the Central Board of the Association of Woodworking Trade Unions (130). The existence of this body was intended to resolve some of the difficulties regarding inter-union relations and demarcation. The establishment of an 'association', or federation circumvented the problems associated with the implementation of a full merger, insofar as

no appeal to the membership was required before a union's general secretary, or leading officials could participate. The involvement of any single union did not necessitate a permanent commitment and it does not seem that the Association had funds independent of its constituent members. Its lack of status was associated with a concomitant lack of power. At most it could be hoped that the Association would regulate inter-union tensions, but its functions were distinctly limited and it does not seem to have been maintained for more than a brief period during this decade.

It was during the same year, 1907, that proposals were again revived for amalgamation between the Amalgamated, General and Associated Societies of Carpenters and Joiners. Again the GS of the GUC&J raised the problem of a reformulation of rules such that the name of the new society would be other than that of the three existing organisations, and that there should be a trade section open to all carpenters and joiners from 20 years of age. The consequence of these, and other stipulations made by the GUC&J was that they did not participate any further in the new round of negotiations (131). Discussions were resumed only between the AC&JS and the ASC&J.

Merger of the AC&JS into the ASC&J was accomplished in spite of the provisions of the TU Amalg. Act, which if they had been observed, would have again precluded progress in the direction of unification. Negotiations were picked up in 1910, and in August of that year a conference was held in Glasgow to draw up a scheme of amalgamation. The matter was put to the members of both unions during the month of October, and considerable efforts were made by the leaders of both societies to achieve the requisite vote in accordance with the prevailing legislation.

In spite of this, the members of the ASC&J did not vote in sufficient numbers - in fact they were over 10,000 short of the two thirds required by the Trade Union Act, and so the project fell through. The repeated vote<sup>s</sup> on amalgamation did nothing to improve the stability of the Associated Society, which in any case had lost members steadily since the beginning of the century. A full revision of its constitution was considered, and it was at this point that a further approach was made from the ASC&J, pointing to the relaxed terms on which individual members might be admitted under an amendment to their own rules. It was on this basis that the majority of members of the Associated Society were brought into the ASC&J, adding 4,129 members in branches in various parts of the country. (132) The assimilation of these members was not easy, since both officers and members had to adapt themselves to working under the rules of the ASC&J, which were quite different to those of the Associated. But it could at least be claimed that this move advanced the progress towards unity within the trade throughout Great Britain. Yet members of the General Union persisted in their independent stance, and a further ballot on the subject<sup>t</sup> of amalgamation during 1912 failed to produce the requisite two thirds of the membership voting in favour.

Discussions on amalgamation recurred regularly between wood-working unions in the first decade of this century. Most of the small societies were reluctant to renounce their identity and accept merger into the ASC&J. It seems likely that their leaders, like the general secretary of the MUOB, were not enthusiastic about an amalgamation which would remove them from office and offer them little chance of obtaining a corresponding position in the merged society. For many of them the situation was

complicated by differences in craft identity - between cabinet makers, mill sawyers, wood-cutting machinists and so on. The question was not merely one of craft sectionalism or even of craft pride. It was apparent that a larger society which catered predominantly for carpenters and joiners in housebuilding and shipbuilding might give less attention to the claims of smaller groups, and that they might have difficulty in obtaining support within the larger organisation for actions in defence of their own interests. And for the two societies which recruited in the same craft area - the ASC&J and the GUC&J, the most important question related to the specific differences which governed the organisation of the two societies, especially the provision made in the GUC&J rulebook for a section of 'trade-only' members. Given these differences it was unlikely that the GS of the smaller union would accept amalgamation simply on the basis of the ASC&J rulebook. Merger could only come about if the rules were reformulated along the lines which were agreed in 1904. But the final difficulty which was encountered - and it was one which may well have inhibited the initiation of discussions on merger, let alone their satisfactory conclusion - was the existence of stringent statutory requirements concerning trade union amalgamation. The rationalisation of trade union structure was a difficult proposition without the rationalisation of trade union law.

### The Painters

The consolidation of the Painters' Societies at a national level was not so advanced as in other trades prior to 1900 (133). The largest society at that time was the Nat. Amalg. Soc. of Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators (Manchester) with a membership of 10,448 in 1900. The 'London Amalgamated',

their nearest rival, had only 5,168 members in the same year. There was little conflict between the two, since their regional strengths were, for the most part, complementary, with the Manchester Amalgamated being stronger in the Northern part of the country, with branches in Lancashire, Cheshire, Northumberland, Yorkshire and some of the Midlands, whilst the 'London Amalgamated', as its name implied, was based in the London area and the home counties, with very few members north of Birmingham.

(134) A separate organisation was maintained in Scotland, claiming 3,163 members in 1900. And many localities, throughout Britain, had local societies of painters, each with their own provisions for contributions and benefits, their own rules and their own officers. (135) During the decade 1900-1910 the number of societies was to be reduced and their organisation rationalised in a move towards one national union for the trade.

It was the largest of the societies, the NASOH&SP&D, which took the initiative in consolidating the forces of the Painters. It was agreed that 'in order to hold our own against the forces which are arraigned against us, that we use all our energies to induce the London Amalgamated Society and the various local societies... to join us for mutual interest and support.' (136)

To this end the rules of the Manchester Amalgamated which precluded the admission of local societies were suspended from 1901, initially for a period of three months. As a result of this move any society or branch, or any members under 35 could be admitted provided firstly that 95% of the applicants produced medical certificates of good health, secondly that each should pay an entrance fee equal to the average worth per member of the NASOH&SP&D - in no case less than 30/- per member

and that non-free members (i.e. those who had not yet been in their society for a sufficient period of time to qualify for benefits) must be 12 months in membership, from the time they joined their respective organisation (137). This more open approach to recruitment was sustained for several years and if the response was initially a slow one, the opening up of membership to local societies did, in time, produce results. At the beginning of 1904 a circular was issued to local societies and by September of that year it was reported that societies in Manchester, Bury, Rochdale, London and Grays had assented to merger (138). Negotiations were in progress with the Liverpool Local Society and with the Scottish Amalgamated, and in towns where previously there had been only a small presence, the union now claimed to control the trade. (139)

It was in the same year that members of the London Amalgamated were persuaded to merge. A flexible approach to the terms on which amalgamation might be conducted facilitated the agreement. At their delegate meeting early in 1904 members of the NASOH&SP&D resolved that if merger with the 'London Amalgamated' were to proceed, the members of the latter could be regarded as free members after the merger, irrespective of their age and length of membership. Moreover if some members preferred to continue paying at the same rate of contributions as provided for in their existing rules, they would be allowed to do so and would be entitled to existing benefits and privileges. Membership of the superannuation scheme would be dated from the time of the merger. It was however understood that new members of the society would be admitted on the terms and conditions of the NASOH&SP&D.

These measures were designed to overcome problems which derived from differences in the rules and the financial arrangements made by the two societies. It is possible that the different geographical base of the two unions further encouraged moves for unification. Certainly the absence of persistent conflict between members of the two societies over recruitment or aspects of trade policy meant that there was less mutual suspicion to be overcome than amongst rival organisations of carpenters or bricklayers (140). When the question of amalgamation was put to the members of the two societies in the summer of 1904, it was given resounding support within both of them and the formal transfer of goods and effects was made in November 1904. The London office was given up, but Bro. E.C. Gibbs, GS of the London Amalgamated was designated AGS of the merged union under the direct control of the EC, although he continued to be based in Clapham (141).

Yet it seems that, in spite of the ease with which the merger was conducted, statutory requirements were not fully observed. It is true that the majority of members voting in each society recorded votes in favour of amalgamation, but in neither case does it seem that the proportion of members voting in favour was formally such as to comply with the 1876 Act.

Voting on amalgamation between the two major Painters' societies,

<u>Society</u>	<u>Size (1901)</u>	<u>Votes for:</u>	<u>&amp; against</u>	<u>% membership voting in favour</u>
NASOH&SP&D	10,833	4,100	436	37.85%
London Amal.	5,380	3,080	583	57.25%

Statutory requirements were that "not less than two-thirds of the (total) members of each or every such trade union" should

consent to the merger. (142) It was on this basis that the projected amalgamation between the two major societies of carpenters and joiners was held up in the same year and it was this obstacle which did so much to prevent amalgamation of trade unions before 1914. It is difficult to understand why, in the case of the painters, the requirements were not upheld. Postgate observes simply that: 'The necessary vote was two-thirds of the membership, by a law which greatly impeded amalgamation, but in this case, and this case only, it was secured without difficulty.' (143) The union minutes make no reference to a problem in achieving the necessary two-thirds vote in favour, and indeed comment simply that the two-thirds majority has been achieved. (144) In view of the fact that the percentage of total members voting in favour of merger in the NASOH&SP&D is actually lower than the percentage voting in favour in the ASC&J in the same year (in connection with merger with the GUC&J discussed above) where 40.1% of the members voted in favour, it is difficult to understand how the amalgamation proceeded so smoothly. It is not that the societies avoided contact with the Registrar or refrained from observation of obligations in this direction, since a certificate of amalgamation of the two societies was given by the Registrar, with effect from 25 Oct 1904. (145) Nor is it the case that membership of the societies declined dramatically so that the operative figure for membership in 1904 was lower than that suggested when the two societies initiated discussions on the basis of their 1901 membership. (146) On the contrary membership rose during the period 1901-1904, particularly in the larger society, where the affiliation of local trade societies boosted membership, and if the 1904 membership figure had been used, the percentage of members voting in favour

of amalgamation would have appeared to be even lower. It is possible that the clue lies in the 'open' approach to membership adopted by the NASOH&SP&D in 1901, since the incorporation of local societies seemed to be possible without reference to statutory requirements or to a vote of members of the larger society. Yet the problem with this argument is that in the case of the merger of the NASOH&SP&D and the 'London Amalgamated' there was a ballot of members of both unions, and officials on both sides seemed to be conscious of the need to observe legal requirements. It is not clear how, given the voting figures which they reported, they managed to do so. Whatever the explanation it is clear that fulfillment of the statutory requirements was a serious impediment to amalgamation. That the Painters managed to find a way around the problem in this instance does not negate the fact that the Trade Union (Amendment) Act 1876 limited the scope for merger and without adjustment of statutory provisions it was only in the most exceptional circumstances that rationalisation of union structure could proceed.

The success of the Painters in bringing about an amalgamation of the two major societies, as well as in negotiating the rationalisation of structure such that the number of small trade societies was considerably reduced meant that henceforth the trade was dominated by one, large society, which operated throughout the country. It gave the painters' organisation a truly national dimension by drawing together unions from different localities, and although the boundaries of organisation were set by the Scottish border, (for the Scottish Painters Society was reluctant to accept merger where their autonomy was not guaranteed) (147) the NASOH&SP&D could now claim to be fully national in scope.

One Big Union: Industrial unionism and the building trades,  
1910-14

The four years preceding the outbreak of war saw an expansion in the organisation and activity of labour reminiscent of the agitations associated with the development of the 'new unions'. Trade union membership rose dramatically - from 2.1m in 1910 to 4.1m in 1914 (148). Trade unions found a base in areas, and amongst workers where previously there had been little or no organisation (149). And in an economic climate which was more favourable than the previous decade for the assertion of workers' claims, the number and the extent of strikes, when judged by the numbers participating rose rapidly (150). There was a wave of aggressive and sometimes violent militancy, characterised by unofficial action in many instances. In the mines, on the docks and the railways, amongst seamen and engineering workers as well as amongst building workers, this new militancy was reflected in disputes in which most of the running was made by the members rather than by the official leaders of the unions concerned.

Just as the 'new unions' had posed a challenge to the tenets of craft organisation twenty years earlier, so the 'Great unrest' encouraged a new attention to the form as well as to the social implications of trade union structure. Concern with the question of trade union organisation in the previous decade derived predominantly from the need of trade unionists to draw together in the face of an attack from the employers. The GFTU had been formed for just this reason, and in building, where the unions had been confronted by a new unity amongst the employers following the formation of the NFBTE in 1901, moves to consolidate trade union organisation derived precisely from the

need for mutual defence. In the context of a growth in trade union membership and militancy the attention to organisational form shifted to an emphasis on tight organisation for the purposes of attack. 'Industrial Unions' - that is one union for each industry, were proposed as a means of drawing together workers, both skilled and unskilled, to confront and challenge the rights of employers (151).

The question of industrial unionism was part of a broader revolutionary movement, syndicalism, which had its origins in parts of the USA and in France. It was intended as a means of uniting workers 'to increase the power of the fighting arm of our class', (152) and syndicalists eschewed the use of political means of achieving working class power. The emphasis in the ideology, as well as the level of organisational practice varied from country to country, and from area to area within each country.

But in Britain, where syndicalist ideology had to confront an established working class movement before it could challenge the power of the employer, it was unlikely to attract the support which might be possible in other parts of the world. Syndicalism appealed to a class-conscious minority, disillusioned both with the moderation of the newly formed Labour Party and with the dogma of the SDF. Following the foundation of the IWW in 1905, British supporters of Daniel De Leon established the British Advocates of Industrial Unionism in 1906. But the main impetus for syndicalism in Britain came with the return of Tom Mann from Australasia in 1910 and the publication of the paper the Industrial Syndicalist, followed by the establish-

ment of the Industrial Syndicalist Education League in December 1910. The Provisional Committee for the Amalgamation of existing Unions was launched in the same year and whilst syndicalist ideas were never to receive a wide support amongst the working class in Britain, within many industries from this time it found adherents amongst a significant minority of activists. (153)

In building, as in other areas, the period 1910-14 witnessed enormous growth in organisation. The ASC&J expanded from 43,347 members to 69,036; the GUC&J from 5,653 to 8,505. The OBS rose from 23,284 to 26,363, the Plasterers from 6,522 to 7,143, the Painters from 14,909 to 29,796 and even the OSM, which had seen a steady erosion of its membership from a peak level in 1900 saw a revival from 7,055 to 10,548.

This growth in membership was paralleled by an increased militancy reflected in the incidence and extent of strikes between 1910 and 1914. After an average of under 35 strikes a year recorded for the period 1901-1910, the number rose to a peak of 198 in 1913, falling slightly in the following year to 177. The number of workers involved also increased, from an average of just under 6,100 between 1901-1910 to a peak of 40,002 in 1913, dropping slightly to 38,000 in 1914, the year of the London Building Workers lock-out (154). It was the conciliation machinery which was blamed for many of the disputes, since it was argued that it hindered progress and benefitted only the employers. (155) The Conciliation Procedures followed those established for engineering, in that a local dispute from any workshop could be brought to a national conference or conciliation panel, although wages and hours

continued to be negotiated district by district. A distinction had been made between the constitutional arrangements for dealing with grievances on the one hand, and questions of wages and hours on the other. (156) In practice the two questions were closely allied and the prevailing dissatisfaction over wages highlighted the ineffectiveness of existing arrangements. (157) The officials were more likely than many members to accept the constraints of conciliation, since it gave them status and recognition and, at least in theory, reduced the possibility of strikes. But the prevailing industrial unrest encouraged a review of the situation and in 1913 exploratory talks took place with a view to the abolition of Conciliation Boards and the establishment of a uniform code of working rules for the entire country (158). The national dimension of existing procedures was not called into question, but it was apparent that the form which they should be given had yet to be resolved.

In the building industry the amalgamation movement established an official base amongst trade unionists. The example set in other industries provided an attractive model - on the railways for example the Amalg. Soc. of Railway Servants (ASRS) came together with the General Railway Workers' Union and the United Pointsmen's and Signalmen's Society in 1913 to form the National Union of Railwaymen. And for class conscious tradesmen industrial unity was associated with a breakdown of the barriers between craft and craft, or between craftsman and labourer in a form of organisation which would unite building trade workers along similar lines.

It was the OBS, which had failed by the summer of 1910 to achieve any progress in amalgamation talks with the MUOB or in

the consolidation of the trowel trades into one trade union, which provided the basis for the campaign for one big union for building workers. Leaders of the OBS had long been sympathetic to the notion of a broader amalgamation. As early as 1897, following the engineering lock-out, John Batchelor, the GS of that union had expressed himself in favour of "only one union in each industry" (159). Of that union's two national organisers, one at least, George Hicks, was an ardent advocate of industrial unionism (160). And the Annual Movable General Council in 1906 had taken up the question of a broader scheme for merger with consideration of a proposition for amalgamation with unions of plasterers and masons, as well as with other societies of bricklayers (161).

It is difficult to understand why the leadership of this society was more progressive than that of other organisations on this issue. But the answer may, to some extent be suggested by the impact of the slump on trade union membership. Of the larger craft societies it was the OBS which was most seriously affected by the erosion of employment opportunities for its members. The impact of new materials - concrete and steel frame buildings, combined with the effects of a cut-back in building of all types to undermine the recruitment of the OBS. Between 1900 and 1910 membership fell from 38,830 to 23,284, that is to 59.96% of the figure for 1900. Even by 1914 it had risen only to 26,363, that is 67.89% of the 1900 membership. Membership of the ASC&J, by contrast fell only to 71.93% of its 1900 membership by 1910. And by 1914, admittedly after absorption of the Associated Carpenters and Joiners Society, the figure for 1900 had been surpassed, and membership had reached 114.56% of that for 1900. (See Appendix C). Trade union density for the

bricklayers & masons fell between 1901 and 1911 from 33.76% to 21.62%. That for the carpenters and joiners also declined, but only slightly, from 26.43% in 1901 to 25.78% in 1911. The Painters, who consolidated their national organisation during this period, showed even more startling gains, and only in the case of the Masons, who had been affected by a longer-term decline in the demand for their skills, was membership less buoyant than within the OBS. It seems likely that even during the climate of aggressive militancy which preceded the Great War, leaders of the OBS had an eye to consolidating their organisation on a broader basis than had hitherto been possible, and looked to an alliance with their more successful brothers in other crafts, as a means for doing so.

The OBS contained a small, but well-organised group of syndicalists who made much of the running on the question of one big union. The same names, and the same branches feature regularly in the correspondence columns of the union's journal over the period 1910-14 - men such as William Gormly (Parkhead branch, Glasgow), J.H. West (East London), J.V. Wills (Deptford), Harry Adams (in London) and George Hicks (Battersea br.) featured prominently in the campaign and their position was boosted by the extent to which they were encouraged by John Batchelor, the General Secretary. A special meeting on the question of industrial organisation was held early in 1911 and an ad hoc committee was set up, numbering only about a dozen sympathisers, chaired by Hicks, to further the aims of industrial unity. The EC agreed to provide some financial assistance for this Provisional Committee together with a meeting hall and, with this backing, the Committee requested branches, through the pages of the Trade Circular, to put up resolutions for the TUC calling upon the Parliamentary Committee to convene conferences

of unions in different industries, with a view to amalgamation along industrial lines. (162)

The campaign for industrial unity of the building unions was informed by syndicalist ideas from its inception. The OBS Consolidation Cttee which was set up in Sep 1911 was influenced by activities within the Industrial Syndicalist Education League and men such as Hicks and Wills, if not syndicalists at the outset were swung round to support for the movement through their involvement with the campaign for amalgamation of the building trades unions. (163) But it is important to recognise that not all supporters of the move for consolidation would appreciate or support the syndicalist ideology put forward by its most active proponents. The prevailing climate of opinion seemed to be in favour of a broad amalgamation, within the OBS at least, for by February 1912 that union had recorded 185 resolutions in favour of amalgamation and only 12 against. (164) Reports within the publications of the ISEL and sympathetic bodies undoubtedly emphasise the extent to which syndicalist ideas were attracting support and suggestions that they "were increasingly making the running on the amalgamation issue, becoming identified by many building militants with the industrial union cause itself", must be treated sceptically (165). A distinction was maintained by the activists themselves between the Consolidation Committee which had official backing within the OBS, and which stood for industrial unionism 'to raise wages and shorten the hours of labour' through a fighting policy, (166) and the Provisional Committee for the Consolidation of the Building Industries Trades' Unions into one Industrial organisation which was more explicit in its objectives. The

publications of the latter laid more emphasis on the possibility of a complete and final overthrow of the employing class and of the function of industrial unions to draw workers together along class lines (167), and 'eventually dethrone King Capital from society.' (168) The activities of the Provisional Committee were centred in London, with some support from the larger industrial centres in the provinces - especially Liverpool and Glasgow, but it is by no means certain that their cause was identified by the bulk of the membership, either in London or in the provinces, with the cause of industrial unionism itself.

Within unions other than the OBS the campaign for consolidation of the building trades' organisations into one big union received less attention in publications and less support from officials. The OBS was unique in providing a measure of official sponsorship and official attitudes in other unions were not so sympathetic. Within the ASC&J the moves received almost unanimous opposition from the General Council, whilst within the OSM, with a sadly depleted membership, the echoes of earlier craft supremacy were sounded with the refusal of OSM leaders to contemplate the wider amalgamation. The resolution from the OBS which was put to the TUC in 1912 was passed unanimously and when the meeting of building trade union representatives was convened to consider the question of their amalgamation a resolution was again passed in favour of industrial organisation. It was agreed that a committee be set up comprising one member of every society represented, to draw up a scheme of amalgamation and to report back to a further conference. (169) This was held in June 1912 when the outline proposals for one union for the building industry were reported

for presentation to the membership. The scheme, which followed very closely the model set out by the Consolidation Committee of the OBS was designed to allow the fullest freedom for different grades to discuss and promote their own particular interests, whilst overcoming sectional divisions. It provided only the barest framework for an organisation of a new type and as such it did not confront in detail the particular, sectional interests which it was aimed to overcome. (170) It was put to the members during the autumn of 1912, but when the votes were reported it became apparent that the majority of members eligible to vote had not bothered to do so, although the results showed that, of those voting, there was a considerable majority in favour of the principle of amalgamation (171),

AMALGAMATION OF BUILDING TRADE UNIONS: Result of Ballot

Union	No. of papers supplied	For	Against	% of members voting for
ASC&J	55,000	18,690	10,523	33.98%
OBS	24,000	4,371	763	18.21
Plumbers	11,250	1,606	291	14.28
OSM	8,000	1,209	61	15.1
NAOP	7,700	1,738	310	22.57
Builders' Lab. (Nat.)	4,500	756	2	16.8
Builders' Lab. (Unit.)	3,000	2,369	40	78.97
MUOB	1,670	427	61	25.57
Street Masons & Pav.	1,150	152	104	13.22
Painters & Dec. (London & Provincial)	900	223	1	24.78
Mosaic & Tile Fixers	<u>100</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
TOTAL	117,370	31,541	12,156	26.87

It is clear that the question of industrial unity attracted only a minority interest within all (but one) of the unions which participated in the ballot. Within the OBS and the OSM where it has been claimed (172) that syndicalist influence was strongest less than a fifth of the membership cast their votes in favour of the proposals. Although this does not disprove claims for syndicalist influence in these unions being stronger than elsewhere, it suggests that, since there would certainly be less syndicalists than there were supporters of a scheme for industrial unionism, their numbers were small and, more importantly that their influence, which might be judged by their capacity to persuade fellow members to cast their votes in favour of the scheme, was limited. It was amongst the carpenters, now the elite of the building trades, that the highest level of support within the craft societies was recorded for an amalgamation of building trade unions. The carpenters, like the bricklayers and masons had been affected by technological innovation, but the effects were less far-reaching and their capacity for organisation was not similarly reduced. Their large vote in favour of consolidation suggests organisational confidence - for the carpenters who were the most numerous of the trades were not likely to be swamped in an amalgamation. And the large vote cast against points to the polarisation which had occurred within the ASC&J on this issue. It was the only union in which a significant number of members turned out against the amalgamation proposals and the high level of opposition, which was led by the General Council, may have encouraged members who were in favour, to cast their votes in this ballot. The difference between the level of participation in the ASC&J and that in other unions is considerable. Whilst

53.1% of ASC&J members voted, only 21.39% of OBS members did so, and a mere 15.9% in the OSM. The split in the ASC&J vote, with approximately a third of the members supporting the principle of amalgamation and about a fifth of the members opposing indicated a real division of opinion, which was likely to harden with any concrete proposals for an amalgamated union. Industrial unionism could claim a wide support amongst carpenters and joiners, but equally it had many opponents. The level of organisation and benefits which they were able to sustain meant that their organisation also encompassed members who bitterly resisted any scheme which might involve merger of their funds and their benefits with other unions.

Since the results, over-all, supported the principle of amalgamation, the question of the government and rules of the amalgamated union were now tabled. At a conference held on December 3-4 1912, draft rules were submitted by Jack Wills, on behalf of the OBS. The conference was attended by representatives of unions which had refused to participate in the ballot, as well as by those who had, and it is not surprising that Wills found the going very heavy. A note had already appeared in the Daily Herald to the effect that the amalgamation scheme had broken down and Wills, isolated and demoralised, returned to the OBS Executive meeting on December 4th complaining at the reception which he was given although formal approval was accorded to his proposals (173). It was clear that a scheme which provided for trade but not for friendly benefits, at a subscription of 2½d a week would not be taken seriously by members of the craft unions, who were attached to the provisions which they had built up over the years. And when this 'twopence ha'penny trade union' scheme was put before the members, it was resoundingly

rejected by the majority of craft societies. (174)

A further set-back for supporters of the amalgamation movement came with the initiation of an alternative scheme for federation, which had its origins with the General Council of the ASC&J. At its meeting in July 1913 proposals were once again brought forward which espoused the rhetoric of 'closer unity' whilst stopping short of a movement for full amalgamation. It was from the ASC&J, the union in which the question of amalgamation into one big union had aroused most controversy, that the proposals for federation were initiated. Negotiations were instigated after the scheme for full amalgamation had effectively been crushed. The most remarkable feature of the new proposals, when contrasted with earlier schemes was the provision within the draft constitution of a guarantee fund into which all affiliates would be obliged to contribute. An initial payment of 4/- per member was to be followed by per capita contributions of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d - 6d per week, payable only during a strike or a lock-out affecting any of the federated trades (175). In return the affiliates could expect to receive trade benefits during a dispute involving their members, up to a maximum of £1 a week. The financial provisions were accompanied by a constitution which vested governing authority in a Legislative Council elected from the General Councils of the affiliated societies, with an Executive Council to be elected from EC's in a similar manner.

The need for some form of co-ordination between building unions at national level, apart from the provisions of the Conciliation Procedure was apparent to most union officials by 1912-13. At a time when the number and extent of strikes was increasing, their control was bounded by the degree to which they could

direct the activities of their members. The relative independence of local federations strengthened the autonomy of branch organisation as against the influence of national bodies and it was this factor which encouraged the attention of the leadership within the ASC&J, the GC as well as the EC and GS, to the problem of co-ordinating trade policy at the national level. It was feared that "the rank and file of which we hear so much, will break loose and become uncontrollable which would be a serious drawback to all progressive movements." (176) In the face of this threat from below, the leadership came together with schemes for a national federation of building trade workers.

The proposals of the ASC&J for a national federation were endorsed, in principle, by leaders of the other unions at a meeting in Oct. 1913. But they were opposed by the active members who continued their campaign for full amalgamation.

The Consolidation Committee of the OBS opposed the scheme on the grounds that past experiences of federation did not justify the claim that it could overcome sectionalism. A federation would have no security of support because any dissatisfied union or group of unions could withdraw. It would not lessen the number of unions, and indeed it would add to the number of officials as the new institution acquired its own hierarchy. (177) Whilst advocates of amalgamation differed in the type of scheme which they wished to initiate, they were united in opposition to the formation of a Federation which seemed to preclude the possibility of one big union. It was in the urban, industrial centres, where industrial unionism had been taken up in other industries, particularly in engineering, that support for amalgamation and opposition to federation was strongest. Resolutions opposing

federation reached the ASC&J Head Office from branches in Clydebank, Coventry, parts of London and Sheffield (178). Their resistance to federation found support from other branches, and when the issue was put to the vote it resulted in a defeat for federation and for the officials. The need for unity was readily apparent, but the means by which it should be achieved, and the level at which it should be aimed were less obvious. Ironically it was the industrial unionists who were in favour of full amalgamation at the national level, a move which ultimately might further the erosion of local autonomy and their own power base. The extent of support for their case was founded in the weakness of local federations in building, as well as disillusionment with federation at national level as expressed through the GFTU. The result was an impasse. Neither amalgamation, nor federation could proceed and discussions on structural change were, in any case temporarily shelved as attention shifted to the London building workers, who were locked out by the employers for six months in 1914.

The London Lock-out highlighted the officials' need for a national federation. London had one of the most effective local federations, whose origins went back at least to the lock-out of 1891. Nine of the unions affiliated to the LBIF were locked out from January 1914, in consequence of their alleged violation of working rules and a general refusal to sign a 'document' repudiating unconstitutional actions. (179) The London employers stressed the question of the authority of the unions nationally over their London members. Would the unions discipline their own members for taking industrial action in breach of agreed local working rules? A questionnaire was sent out to the national Executive Councils of the unions concerned and, in the absence of any machinery permitting a unified response, the employers' manoeuvre produced the

chaos which it was clearly intended to create. The OBS attempted to contact other societies before responding to the employers, only to find that the Plasterers had already replied and that F. Chandler, GS of the ASC&J had sent a general reply in the belief that he alone had been approached in his capacity as secretary for the operatives' side of the National Conciliation Board.

(180) The employers refused to negotiate with the leaders of the LBIF, but agreed to meet the Executives of the unions - a move which exploited the lack of formal relationship between the ad hoc meetings of EC's and the organised and established local federation. (181)

The absence of formal links between the unions at national level undermined the solidarity of the strike. The stoppage was pursued with remarkable enthusiasm during the first half of 1914. The labourers, as well as the craft societies were out and two attempts to resolve the conflict, during April and May by concessions to the employers were overwhelmingly defeated in ballot votes (182). The weak link in the chain was the OSM. Their tradition of craft elitism had outlived their elite position within the building trade unions and as demand for their skills was reduced by the more widespread use of reinforced concrete, so their members responded with an assertion of their own craft superiority. The separatism of their outlook was sharply reflected during the last three months of the lock-out. They were the only union whose members voted for an acceptance of the terms offered in April. And by the time of the second ballot in May it was clear that the London members of the OSM were in support of ending the dispute - notwithstanding the views of their own, militant Executive (183). The EC of the NFBTE resolved on 11th May that a national lock-out should be declared if no agreement

was reached. The EC's met early in June to discuss the impending lock-out and it was apparent that they wished to avert the threat by bringing the dispute to an end (184). A further ballot was held, despite the objections of the London Management Committees of some of the societies (185). Against the advice of the EC's and indeed some of the London Leadership, the vote once again went against settlement - 4,565 in favour to 14,081 against. Only two societies, the OSM and the Machinists voted in favour and the OSM immediately announced that if no further steps were taken by the LBIF they would open sectional negotiations with the LMBA. (186) The Stonemasons, the Engine and Crane Drivers and the Woodcutting Machinists renewed their working rule agreements in July on the terms recommended in June. Facing disunity in London and with the threat of a national lock-out due to commence on August 15th, the Joint Executives hastened to end the dispute. (187)

The Executives now confronted the tricky problem of persuading or coercing their London memberships to accept an agreement which differed little from those they had previously rejected. Their situation was complicated by the fact that the London employers were insisting on local representatives putting their signatures to the agreement. They met with considerable resistance and, in the case of the ASC&J, the Executive were obliged to dismiss the London MC and appoint their own representatives to control the affairs of the London District, whose signature was accepted by the employers (188). Within the OBS, leaders of the Metropolitan District Committee, Harry Adams and J. Lane, refused to sign the agreement, unless they first had the sanction of the Metropolitan branches (199). It was not the outbreak of war which ended the London dispute as Postgate suggests. Rather

it was the determination of the Joint Executives, acting in concert, to control their London members and to avert the threat of a national lock-out.

The dispute highlighted the fundamental weakness of the fragmented structure of the building trade unions. Within the London area the LBIF was able to link the various trades and initiate action in the face of the employers' attack. But as soon as the focus of negotiations was shifted to national level by the threat of the Employers to instigate a national lock-out, the need for a body to take decisions and to initiate action at national level was apparent. The Executives of the building trades unions faced two problems. Firstly they were required to negotiate with the Executive of the NFBTE at national rather than at district level. And secondly, in doing this, they were required to exert some authority over their London memberships, whose allegiance was to the local Federation over which they, that is the National Executives, had no control. They responded by meetings of representatives of the various Executives, but their ad hoc meetings continued and were given formal status in the months which followed through the formation of the National Associated Building Trades Council. (190)

#### The problems of structural change before 1914

Two forms of merger were projected within the building trade unions before the outbreak of war. The first concerned amalgamation between cognate trades, where unions recruited within the same or similar crafts. The second was related to the wider movement for industrial unionism and proposed to overcome the barriers separating craft from craft by the formation of one big union for the building industry. Postgate

identified three main factors inhibiting progress towards an industrial union - (191) the state of the law, the apathy of the members and the opposition of the officials. These factors, it could be argued were as much a hindrance to less ambitious proposals for merger between kindred trades as they were to the more sweeping propositions for one big union. Both types of amalgamation were obstructed by the Trade Union (Amalgamation) Act which posed an insuperable problem every time two or more unions moved close to the point where merger seemed to be a real possibility. In the case of the carpenters and joiners in 1904 the legislation prevented an amalgamation to which the assent had been obtained of a vast majority in each of the unions concerned. And if, in the case of the Painters and the Associated Carpenters and Joiners, some progress was made in the direction of unification, this seems to have been in spite of, rather than because of the workings of legislation governing trade union amalgamation. One of the imponderable factors, when the question of merger is considered at this time, is the extent to which legislation discouraged trade union leaders from initiating talks in that direction. If it was clear that amalgamation was made almost impossible by the state of the law, then it is unlikely that much effort would be made in discussing and formulating the details of projected mergers, which would be dropped because of the inability of one or other of the unions involved to satisfy the stringent voting requirements which must be fulfilled. If this was an important element inhibiting discussion of the more limited cognate trade mergers, where the logic of recruitment sometimes seemed to impel union leaders into talks in spite of themselves, how much more significant would it be for the broader industrial union which was the theme of the period 1910-1914.

The importance of the law in obstructing amalgamation does not weaken Postate's other points which were related to the apathy of the members and the resistance of the officials. It is perhaps unfair to allege that it was the members who had joined following the passing of the National Insurance Act who were the apathetic non-voters on the question of amalgamation, although it is not unreasonable to assume that some at least of the new members would have little sense of the importance of such a vote. But given the discrepancy in voting between the ASC&J and the OBS members on the question of one big union in 1912, the assertion does not seem to be borne out since it is the ASC&J, where membership had expanded more rapidly, which shows the higher level of participation in the ballot. It is clear that the members were often apathetic, or at least insufficiently concerned by the question of restructuring the building unions, to bother to cast their votes in elections on the question. Here again it is difficult to ascertain why this was the case. It may be that members were confident that amalgamation would receive sufficient support in any ballot to allow the principle to be accepted, but it may also be the case that they were not aware - and were not made aware by their own officials, of the need for a high vote if the changes were to be realised. Although this factor may have been significant in some of the early projects for merger, it was certainly not the case after 1910, when advocates of industrial unionism included information on the need for a substantial poll within their general propaganda on the one big union. And despite their attempts to raise interest and enthusiasm about the issue, the % of members voting in the poll in 1912, as has already been noted, was, with the exception of the ASC&J, extremely low. It has been argued that the period 1910-14 was one which was characterised by 'proto-syndicalist mood' (192),

by a wave of class feeling which both corresponded to and encouraged the spread of ideas associated with syndicalism. But the limitations to this argument are suggested within the building trades, where a response to industrial unionism and to syndicalism was apparent to some extent in London and the better organised industrial centres, but, in terms of the aggregate membership was evident only amongst a tiny proportion of craftsmen. The improvement in building activity and the broader economic climate combined to encourage a movement on issues of wages and conditions, with or without the support of union Executives and officials, but it could not be claimed that on the basis of participation in ballots and campaigns on the issue of the one big union, which provide an indication of the consciousness of the members, the majority of members had more than the vaguest notion of the issues which had been taken up by the militant minority.

The attitude of officials, as Postgate suggests did little to further the progress of amalgamation, although here a difference must be noted between their conduct in talks of limited or cognate mergers, and between schemes for wider amalgamation. It is true that they were weighed down by the 'dead hand of tradition', at least in the case of the craft organisations, but where a limited merger promised to strengthen and centralise control by leaders of the largest union in each craft, it was likely to be taken up and to receive support from officials who, in other instances, would be reluctant to accept the philosophy behind projects for amalgamation. The clearest example is the attitude shown by the GS and the members of both Executive and General Councils within the ASC&J during the period 1903-1910, when absorption of the smaller woodworking societies was actively

pursued. Their attitude was paralleled within the OBS in relation to the MUOB, and within the NASOH&SP&D as regards the assimilation of smaller societies of painters. In all of these cases the leading officials of the larger unions accepted the need for the consolidation of their society, although their concern was not always reflected in an awareness of the sensibilities of leaders of the smaller societies. Here it is clear that there was resistance, especially where the General Secretary might expect to lose his position and his salary if the merger were successfully concluded. Geo. Clarke of the MUOB actively resisted attempts by representatives of the OBS to have the question of amalgamation between the two unions raised with members of the smaller organisation. And leaders of the smaller unions of woodworkers were reluctant to contemplate assimilation into the ASC&J. In justification, for the attitudes shown in this respect, it must be said that the officials of the larger unions did not suggest, by their stance in negotiations that the particular interests and concerns of members of the smaller craft societies would be given their continued attention once a merger was realised. The reluctance of the ASC&J leadership to contemplate any alteration to their rules in accordance with the more open admissions procedure of the General Union was a serious obstacle to any advance in rationalisation of trade union structure, and it is clear from the breakthrough which was made in 1904, that a concession on this point could win over both leaders and members of the General Union to the cause of amalgamation.

As regards proposals for one big union for the building industry, opposition from the official level was much wider, although, as has already been noted in the case of the OBS, it was by no means unanimous. The project for a broad amalgamation called into question, not just the organisation and structure of the

existing movement, but its functions and purpose. Leaders of the craft societies were, by 1912, caught up in a framework for negotiation which tied them, in terms of their function and interests, to the existing relations between capital and labour. Although the framework, in the form of the Conciliation Boards, was subject to criticism, both the employers and the officials of the building unions saw the need for its maintenance or its improvement rather than its abolition. Representatives of the operatives, at this level, were in no way prepared to take on board the arguments of the syndicalists which challenged the rights of the employers to own and control the industry in which their members were engaged. They understood that organisation along industrial lines posed a threat to their social philosophy as well as to the form of their organisation, and they moved to contain and to discredit syndicalists who campaigned for the one big union. At the same time leaders of the larger unions absorbed and reproduced some of the rhetoric associated with industrial unionism, where it could be aligned with their own aims of rationalising, although not fundamentally restructuring, the existing crafts societies. They took from the syndicalists a language which was associated, essentially, with class conflict. And they attached it to their own designs for reorganisation through federation and for the operation and improvement of collective bargaining machinery.

The problems of sectionalism facing the industrial unionists were of far more immediate concern than the consideration of the detailed operations of the one big union. It was the entrenched resistance from within the craft unions, the opposition of their leaders and the lack of commitment of their members which proved to be the major obstacle.

"While nothing was easier in theory than for the building operatives to unite in one revolutionary union, the obstacles created by their past history were immense. The very strength of the work of Applegarth and Coulson was a hindrance." (193)  
The craft basis of the building trade unions would not easily be swept away.

## Pt. 2. National Trade Unions and The National Federation

This second part of the thesis comprises three chapters (ie chapters 2-4).

Chapter 2 deals with the unions in war time covering the years 1914-20. The most notable organisational feature of these years for the building trade unions was the creation of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives. In order to explain this development an account is given of the impact of war on the industry and its negotiating machinery. The emergence of shop steward organisation in building production, in aircraft woodworking and in other areas is highlighted and its importance is counterposed to the formation of the National Federation. Finally attention is turned to the post-war period and to the confirmation of the new structures.

In chapter 3 attention is turned to the amalgamations which were concluded at the end of the war. The history of merger discussions is traced, firstly between kindred trades, and secondly across the traditional boundaries between crafts, and between craftsmen and labourers. The chapter concludes with some comments on the nature of the mergers which were concluded in this period, both as to their extent and their limitations.

In the fourth chapter the history of the building trade unions is traced during the inter-war years. Political and economic changes were of primary importance for the industry and its workers, and an account is given of the operation of the new bargaining and organisational structures and their adaptation to peace-time circumstances.

Trade union organisation and collective bargaining were national

in scope by 1920. The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, set up during the Great War, was adapted to the demands of the post-war situation over the years which followed.

CHAPTER 2.

THE FORMATION OF THE NFBTO, 1914-20

## The formation of the NFBTO, 1914-20

### Introduction

The first world war marked a watershed in the history of British Labour. Before 1914 labour leaders had played little part in the process of government. For the first time between 1914 and 1918, trade union leaders were taken into partnership by the state albeit in a rather junior capacity. The urgent need for labour, both for the military and for war industries lent a new significance to the influence of trade union leaders in particular amongst the working population. This influence was harnessed by the state to ensure the successful prosecution of the war. Within the workplace this development was paralleled by the growth in shopfloor organisation. Union membership expanded dramatically - membership of unions affiliated to the TUC almost quadrupled between 1910 and 1920.

(1) Trade union organisation touched many workers who previously had been outside its scope. Many women became trade union members for the first time (2). Shop floor strength was felt through the emergent shop stewards' movement, based primarily on the engineering industry. The distance between members and officials, between shopfloor representatives and union leaders was widening, but this only added to the power of stewards, since their leaders were committed to, and implicated by policies and decisions which derived from government, rather than from their own members.

The war generated sharper conflicts and greater industrial unrest than had been apparent even in the turbulent years which preceded its outbreak. The increases in food prices, the inadequate housing which was accentuated by the movement of population during the war years heightened the unrest which was associated with government intervention in labour relations.

The introduction of military conscription and arrangements for exemption, the controls established over the movement of labour and the outlawing of strikes contributed to a climate of hostility in which compliance with and enthusiasm for the war effort were replaced by disaffection and in some cases outright hostility to government policies. (3) There was a growing belief, encouraged by events in Russia, that social changes were imminent. And in this context there was a move to reformulate policies and restructure organisations to fit the challenge of the post-war years. Amongst employers as well as amongst trade unionists there was an awareness that the post-war reconstruction demanded a new approach to relations between employers and operatives. This view was encouraged by the combativity of labour at the end of the war but the changes which were implemented outlasted the post-war industrial conflicts.

In the building trades, as elsewhere there were moves to new structures as relations between employers and operatives were consolidated at the national level. One of the bodies to emerge from this period was the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, an organisation which survived, with some adaptations, through to the formation of UCATT. A federation of this type demands attention in a study of trade union structure for it seems likely that its formation was of profound importance to the continued and independent existence of those unions which claimed a craft tradition. Proposals for federation had long been counterposed to schemes of amalgamation, and an account must be given of the reasons for which federation was finally implemented. The functions of the new Federation will be considered in respect of the changing relationship with the employers. How far did the NFBTO derive from the shift, in wartime, towards national collective bargaining? What role did

it occupy in the arrangements for bargaining, And what other functions did it assume in the context of sectional craft organisation? What were the arrangements governing inter-union relations within the NFBTO? And how much autonomy remained to the affiliated unions? These questions are central to an understanding, not only of the Federation itself, but also of the unions of which it was composed. The chapter which follows focuses on the formation of the Federation. Attention is given, firstly to the impact of war on building production. The development of collective bargaining is then considered, before an account is given of the formation and structure of the Federation itself.

The Federation was by no means the only innovation in the industrial organisation of building during this period. Two other interesting initiatives were taken, although neither of them claimed the long-term impact which must be ascribed to the NFBTO. The Building Trades Parliament was instigated by an idealistic employer, Malcolm Sparkes. It was claimed as a new form of industrial government, including both operatives and employers, and it was maintained, at least nominally for four and a half years. The National Building Guild was also formed as an outcome of the widespread concern with questions of industrial democracy and local Guilds were operated in several areas, most notably in Manchester and London. But like the Building Trades Parliament, the Guilds survived only for a brief period. Both organisations, it was claimed, posed a challenge to the ownership and control of the industry in which they operated. Both, it could be argued, reflected the small scale of operations which still characterised building production. In both bodies working class control was blurred by aspirations to social mobility as a means of extending that control. And both were

speedily by-passed as industrial conflict replaced projects for industrial democracy in the post-war era. (4) If the employers were prepared for concessions whilst demand for building work was high and labour was in short supply, this did not remain the case for very long. The Building Trades Parliament and the Building Guilds raised interesting questions concerning the control of industry, but neither of them confronted the problems of the entrenched control of private employers which ensured that their own existence was necessarily short-lived. Larger units of production were encouraged during the war years and the bigger employers had no intention of permanently relaxing their control in favour of their workers. Since, in neither case was there a significant impact on the form or functions of trade union organisation, it is not intended here to give further attention to their operations. An account of their activities has little direct bearing on the question of trade union structure.

#### Building Production and the War

The depressed state of building production in many cases during the first decade of the century was replaced by greater activity from 1912. In that year employment was fair on the whole, with unemployment at its lowest level since 1902. (5) That happy situation was broken by the outbreak of war. Private building was rapidly cut back, to such an extent that the National Associated Building Trades Council (NABTC) urged the necessity, to the Board of Trade, of putting building works into operation. (6) The Public Works Loans Board refused to sanction loans for housing purposes and discouraged new starts on the grounds that they would attract men who were eligible for military service (7). This was followed by the use of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) Regulation 8A (b) to limit the employment

of labour on private work and the consequence in the early months of the war was a rise in unemployment in the building industry. By December 1915 the general level of unemployment in the building trades was around 5%, although the figure for plumbers, navvies and labourers was rather lower (8). It was amongst the skilled workers that the impact was most marked, especially in those areas - for example in stonemasonry, where the work would normally be of a specialised or ornamental nature. (9)

As the government requirements for war production were extended so the range and volume of building production was increased. The general principle adopted was that new work should not be allowed unless it was necessary for the prosecution of the war. The aim was to conserve both materials and labour, and by the second half of 1915 government commitments were such that unemployment was falling. Some trades were more readily assimilated to war production than were others. Carpenters and joiners for example could find employment in aircraft construction or shipbuilding; bricklayers were needed for the construction of military camps and aerodromes. And although there was less demand for the skills of plasterers or masons, unemployment was declining in even these sectors by the second half of 1915. From this time onwards, building production was hampered by a shortage of labour (10). A further regulation was issued under the DORA (Regulation 8E) in July 1916 intended to restrict private building. It forbade the undertaking or completion of any building contract of more than £500 in value, unless for a Government contract, a local authority, or by licence for the Ministry of Munitions (11). Some 20% of applicants for a building licence were refused and prosecutions were made in

some cases for building without a licence. The labour shortage was worsened by the loss of men to the forces - moves which were encouraged in some instances in the early months of the war by trade union leaders who were anxious to rid their trade of the reserve of unemployed labour (12). Despite restrictions on private building, the shortage of skilled labour persisted during the second half of the war, although the system of licences was continued and operated still more stringently (13).

The tasks undertaken by building craftsmen during war time were often not their habitual ones. As industrial production was centred in military requirements, so building skills were applied in this area, and the relocation of building workers was accompanied by an adaptation of their traditional skills to new areas of production. Aircraft manufacture for example had been very limited before 1914. At the outbreak of war there were only eight firms making aircraft, of which three were producing experimental aircraft engines (14). Aircraft production developed rapidly during the war years, as its importance for the war effort became apparent. Extensive government factories were established and hundreds of private firms moved into the area, either on the manufacture of component parts or on the supply of aeroplanes. Aircraft construction provided a major sector of employment for woodworkers from different trades. Coach-makers, joiners, wheelwrights, organ builders, cabinet makers, patternmakers and machinists were all employed in the new aircraft factories, which still relied primarily on woodworking processes. Many of the operatives were recruited from house-building and there is little doubt that the requirements of their new work, whilst within their capacity as tradesmen, using the same tools, were very different from the joiners' shop or the building site. Similarly in munitions production, the

immense expansion of output laid a severe strain on facilities for the manufacture of boxes, particularly for cartridges. National factories were established and in this area of wood-working, as in aircraft production, the trend was to the standardisation of production as output was increased (15). Whilst bricklayers were more often confined to their traditional area of employment, the tendency of government departments to favour rapid temporary constructions precluded the exercise of the full range of their crafts skills in many instances (16).

Skilled labour was central to government policy in industry from 1915. The intention of the Treasury Agreement of March 1915 was to relax trade union rules and customs and this was followed in May-June of the same year by the War Munitions Volunteer Scheme, intended to provide greater labour mobility. From September of the same year the emphasis was shifted to dilution of skilled labour, with a view to using unskilled and semi-skilled labour, wherever possible as a substitute for the apprentice-trained craftsman (17). Dilution meant

"the entire reorganisation of the workshop with a view to obtaining an output limited only by the number of skilled men available for skilled work and supervision, and by the quality of the newest machinery obtainable at home and abroad." (18)

Its first and most important application was intended to be in machine tool production, but the principle was extended to other areas in which skill shortage seemed to jeopardize output, including the building trades. The casual nature of building work and the shifting location of production facilitated the introduction of dilutees, since craft resistance was less feasible where a completely new workforce was being recruited.

Yet craftsmen were not prepared to abandon their claims to exclusive rights over certain types of work. Friction resulted in two distinct but inter-related situations. Firstly in the rapidly expanding aircraft industry, where woodworkers were adapting their skills to the requirements of a new production process there was an assertion that new work processes should be designated as craft skills and paid accordingly. Aircraft manufacture required skills far beyond those needed in other branches of woodworking, it was claimed. The same tools were used; the same qualities of craft exercised. There was no difference, it was argued, in the level of aptitude required in this sphere than in others where the craftsman's worth was fully recognised and recompensed (19). If one area of conflict related specifically to the new woodworking processes associated with aircraft production, the other was centred on the use of unskilled or semi-skilled labour on particular tasks which had, hitherto been part of the craftsman's preserve. The 'hammer and saw' men who appeared in many areas were unwelcome enough, but the most conspicuous dilutees were the women who were brought in to factory based woodworking processes not only in aircraft production, but also in other areas relating to munitions (20).

The intrusion of female labour into the craft world was an uncomfortable feature of the war years for the woodworking operative. 'Works previously closed to them are now, to a great extent dependent on them.' Resistance was impossible, but the Woodworkers' Trades Unions moved to control both the wages and the conditions of employment of women in order to protect the interests of their own members. Claims were submitted, not only to establish agreed levels of payment for women, but also to ensure that skilled operatives were not displaced by women without other appropriate work being found for them; that

women were not employed whilst skilled male labour was available; and that dilution should be for the period of the war only (21). Standards were set by the Munitions (Employment and remuneration of women and girls employed on woodwork for aircraft) Order No.1, issued in Sep 1916 (22), but at the local level the issue remained a sensitive one for the duration of the war. In parts of London it seemed that 'Girls working with the men are getting the same rate of wages and are looked on as mates, Girls working by themselves are not recognised by the men.' (23) Women were accepted for as long as their presence did not challenge the rights of the craftsmen to the skilled work. The demarcation between skilled and unskilled work was not clearly established in the fairly new sector of aircraft production, and disputes inevitably arose as 'it appears that the whole of the skilled workers under the present instructions of the Ministry can be worked out by the dilution of Female and semi-skilled labour'. (24) On this question of female labour, as on the issue of new processes in aircraft manufacture, there was concern, both from trade union leaders and members, to assert the prerogatives of craft skill.

The war had an enormous impact on building production and building tradesmen. Many craft workers were shifted to new or unfamiliar sectors where their skills could be applied to war production. Dilutees appeared in the workshops undertaking tasks which previously would have been within the preserve of the time-served craftsman. And employment in private house-building work was cut back to make way for government projects in furtherance of the war. The geographical location of production was shifted from the larger towns to the more remote parts of the countryside. Military encampments and aerodromes were constructed in isolated regions, far removed from the

accommodation, comforts and trade union organisation of the major cities and towns (25). So building workers found themselves not only on different types of work to those which they might normally tackle, but also in different places, where the organisation and conditions established in earlier years could not be taken for granted, but must be fought for again.

#### Negotiating machinery for the building trades, 1914-20

Regional and district variations in wage rates were accepted by trade unions before 1914. Negotiations were pursued on a local or district basis even though the unions might themselves be organised nationally. The impact of war on existing arrangements was remarkable for the impetus which it gave to the establishment of national machinery for collective bargaining in many areas. The dramatic rise in prices, particularly of staple commodities created a demand for wage increases to keep pace, a move which was national in its effects, encouraging a shift to national arrangements for wage structures and negotiations. Compulsory arbitration, which operated during the second half of the war, facilitated the consolidation of national machinery (26). The mobility of labour during war-time, when industry was relocated and population directed to new centres of employment, encouraged identity with a national organisation and national arrangements concerning wage rates. Shop floor militancy encouraged a new approach to questions of bargaining arrangements and the government of industry, reflected in the Report of the Whitley Committee during 1917-18 with its emphasis on the joint representation of employers and operatives in national industrial arrangements (27).

All of these trends were reflected in the building trades. The existence of national conciliation machinery had set a precedent

for the consideration of certain issues across district boundaries, but not all localities were within the scheme and its effectiveness was severely limited by the lack of co-operation between trades at a national level. The 'millstone of conciliation' was often unpopular with operatives, where it seemed to slow down consideration of grievances and to remove the initiative from them (28). Its limitations had been highlighted by the lock-out of building workers in London in 1914, initiated by the employers in response to an alleged violation of working rules. The employers were concerned, in a period of escalating conflict within London building production, to force consideration of grievances through the Conciliation machinery, (to which the London Building Trades Federation was not affiliated), to resist strikes against non-unionists and to divide trade from trade. To this end they initiated a lock-out which endured for over six months and which was broken only by the compliance of the executives of most of the unions concerned with the wishes of the employers. (29) The London lock-out reflected the uneasy arrangements which existed for the resolution of disputes. Whilst its conclusion following the outbreak of war produced no immediate solution to this problem, the demands of the war itself pointed the way for a new form of relationship with the employers at national level.

The geographical relocation of building during the war years necessitated a reappraisal of the system by which wage rates were set. There was often a wide variation in the level of wages between towns and the surrounding countryside. If building workers were to accept employment away from their own area, particularly in the unpleasant conditions associated with many of the large-scale projects in more remote regions, wage rates must be adjusted for those regions to a more

acceptable level. During the early years of the war there was a move from negotiating wages town by town or district by district, into negotiating arrangements which allowed wages to be settled for a much wider area, such areas including sometimes three or four counties (30). The objective was a general uplifting of the lower paid districts to the rates and conditions of employment which applied to the higher paid districts. Workers in the country districts stood to benefit by comparison with operatives in the industrial areas. And if labour could be directed from different districts to one large project in response to the national requirements of war, it seemed sensible to attempt a rationalisation of wage structure to correspond to this wider labour market.

If standardisation of wage rates between districts was one part of the response to the war-time situation, standardisation between different trades within one district was another. Local building trades federations were established in many centres, but their existence did not always imply uniform arrangements for collective bargaining. Branches or Management Committees of a particular union might negotiate with a local association of employers for their particular trade and it has been noted that the building industry, prior to the war, had as many employers' associations as all other industries put together (31). One trade - for example the carpenters and joiners, might set the pace for others, but this did not necessarily imply joint negotiation. In other cases trade negotiations were pursued completely separately, and there was no automatic link between trade movements by the different craft unions. The desirability of joint action at the local level was quickly appreciated by union members in war-time. The first move was towards the standardisation of rates for

wage adjustment and notice for trade movements to be initiated, so that joint action between trades could be taken. This did not automatically involve standardisation of rates, but it suggested a commitment to standard increases or at least to the maintenance of existing differentials. It was agreed that before any union initiated a movement for higher pay, there should be consultation of all kindred trades in the locality, with a view to concerted action (32). The move towards standardisation between trades as well as across districts was a significant feature of the war years.

The logical conclusion of a policy which stressed the upgrading of lower paid to higher paid districts was the establishment of a national wage structure. The area scheme was a decisive move in that direction for it could then be claimed that:

"instead of dealing with villages, towns, cities or counties as we used to do, we are practically settling wages and conditions of employment for our members in the housebuilding industry right from John O' Groats to Land's End." (33)

The employers were not inclined to resist the 'national idea' during war-time. Indeed some employers were converted to the notion, and encouraged the standardisation of wage rates as a move in this direction (34). Throughout the various sectors in which building trades operatives found employment there was a tendency to national, rather than local standards for the duration of the war.

#### The formation of the NFBTO

It was the formation of a breakaway organisation, the Building Workers Industrial Union, which provided the initial reason for continuing the liaison of the building unions at national

level initiated during the London lock-out. The frustration felt by militants at the failure of their earlier attempts to amalgamate the building unions was exacerbated by the confrontation between lay activists and officials during the London lock-out. The founding conference of the BWIU in August 2-3 1914 brought together some of the leading militants both from the Amalgamation Committee and from the strike, men such as Ingram of the ASC&J, Harry Adams and J. Wills of the OBS, Beachamp of the Painters and Banfield and Ince of the Labourers.

(35) The absence of George Hicks, newly appointed to an organiser's position within the OBS was a disappointment to the founder members of the BWIU, since he had been involved in their earlier campaigns and his aspirations to official position were blamed. It may be the case that Hicks (who had already renounced an official position on a previous occasion), together with other militants who had been associated with the Amalgamation Campaign, recognised the difficulties of building up a breakaway union, in the face of the entrenched position of the craft organisations. The initiative certainly worried the leaders of the established trade unions, for they called a joint meeting on September 16th at which the main question was the attitude to be taken to the newly formed union (36). Their first move was to oppose dual membership and decisions to disallow membership to men who had joined the BWIU had already been taken in the ASC&J, the Painters, the OSM and the United Builders' Labourers' Union. Secondly it was agreed that a recommendation be put to all EC's that the membership cards of the BWIU should not be recognised (37). The new union was doomed from the outset for war-time conditions ensured that its growth would be impeded. The hostility of the leaders of the established unions meant

that its militants could expect more, not less opposition from this quarter. And members of those unions were unlikely to give ready support to men whose actions threatened to undermine their own organisation. The BWIU absorbed the membership and energies of some of the best of the building trade union militants, leaving control of the older societies more firmly in the hands of the established leadership. Leaders of the Amalgamation Campaign, leaders of the opposition to federation had been removed. The way was clear for an adjustment of the structure of these societies which could consolidate, rather than undermine the control of the existing leaders of the building trades unions. (38)

The constitution of the NABTC was drawn up at a meeting between representatives of the various trades on October 15 1914. Its major objectives were twofold: firstly to ensure that the BWIU should not increase its membership or its influence, and secondly to make joint representations to the government and elsewhere, regarding the impact of war on the building industry. The stagnation of the BWIU allowed the NABTC to concentrate on the general problems facing building workers in war-time. In 1915 it took up the question of restrictions on building work and the refusal of loans for home building by the Public Works Loans Board. During the following year, when the Ministry of Munitions issued its order to restrict the availability of licences for building work it again protested. It provided a forum for the discussion of general issues during the first two years of the war, but it was not centrally involved in collective bargaining which remained the prerogative of individual unions, or standing committees (39).

Proposals for a Federation of Building Trades Unions were revived in 1916 (40). Once again it seemed that federation offered the possibility of collaboration without the attendant difficulties of amalgamation. The exigencies of war demanded closer co-ordination and the NABTC offered little possibility, in its existing form for negotiations with the employers, or even for representation with the Government, over the wide range of issues which were of common interest. It was the leaders of the ASC&J who were especially concerned to consolidate the closer links between the building trades unions. The difficulties of sustaining a campaign against pbr and dilution when the trade union movement was itself divided on these issues was apparent by 1916. The problems in aircraft production in particular, where the Committee on Production (a body set up in Feb 1915 which became in effect a court of arbitration between employers and unions) refused to recognise the building trade rate threatened to undermine the basis on which the craft societies operated. As the largest of those societies it was the ASC&J which led the field in opposition to the erosion of traditional standards and methods of payment. The NFBTO was born out of the need to defend craft standards, through collaboration between craft unions at the national level (41).

Despite past opposition to the scheme of federation, the NFBTO was formed on the basis of membership support, expressed through a ballot held in 1917. This time the results indicated a majority of members in favour of the principle of federation.

(42) The contrast with 1913 was marked. Whereas in the pre-war era the Federation scheme was undermined by pro-amalgamationists and had lost when put to the ballot, the

combined Executives were not able to proceed on the basis of a positive return. The loss of the younger and more militant members, both to the army and to the breakaway union may have strengthened the campaign for federation by removing the most vocal opposition. But a number of other explanations might be advanced. Firstly it was clear that little progress could be made during the war for the wider schemes of amalgamation, despite the impending changes in the law (43), for the requisite returns on ballots would be impeded by the dispersal of members and the disruption of normal branch activities. Secondly the problems of wartime left little energy for the construction and pursuit of amalgamation projects. Trade union officers were undertaking a wider and more complex range of tasks as their relationship with government departments and with the employers was adapted to wartime needs. Thirdly it could be argued that federation was not permanent or final, and could easily be reversed if members opposed it on returning from the war. Amalgamation, by contrast was irreversible. Finally it was clear, to members and to officials alike, that some adjustment was necessary in the face of the intense problems facing building trade unionists. Federation provided one expedient for maintaining a united front in the face of the divisive tactics deployed by the employers and the government.

The rules of the NFBTO were formulated during 1917 and its constitution was ratified at a meeting held in Manchester on February 5th 1918. Its objects were "to uphold the rights of Combination of Labour; to consolidate the unions for mutual protection; the adjustments of disputes that may arise; to provide financial support in times of strike or lock-out; to improve the general position and

status of the workers by securing unity of action amongst the Societies forming the Federation." (44)

Its governing authority was the Executive Council of the federation which consisted of two members from each affiliated national union and met quarterly. At the annual meeting of the EC an Emergency Committee was elected to consist of 4 officers and 5 members, but no more than one member of any trade was to be represented. General and assistant general secretaries were eligible for appointment to this body. In many respects the scheme was reminiscent of the 1913 scheme for federation. In particular the provision of a guarantee fund into which all unions must contribute was designed to strengthen the authority of the federation. Each union, on affiliation was to pay a fee of 6d per member on 90% of the total membership. A society became eligible for benefits only after six months had elapsed since affiliation. And if a society decided to disaffiliate it forfeited all of the subscriptions and contributions which had been paid. Contributions were initially set at a rate of 8d per member per year, but the Executive Council were empowered to raise an additional levy of up to 4d per member per week if this proved necessary. In return each society was eligible for trade benefits of 5/- per week and the power to pay or to withhold payment was vested absolutely in the Executive Council. These financial resources distinguished the NFBTO from the NABTC which was subsumed within it in 1918. They provided a lever for controlling the activities of individual unions, or members of unions, since it was provided that no society should enter into a trade dispute without first obtaining the clearance of the Emergency Committee or

the Executive Council. Henceforth the sanction for major trade movements and industrial action was shifted from the Executives of the individual unions to the governing body of the Federation (45). The formation of this new body, with its own rules and offices and its own full time General Secretary, appointed to his position by the Federation's Executive Council laid the basis for subsequent amendments to trade union structure in the building trade world. Henceforth no changes were possible without reference to the role and interests of the Federation.

The NFBTO was given a local as well as a national framework for its operations. Local branches of the NFBTO were licenced where there were two or more branches of the national societies forming the Federation. The local branch of the federation comprised the trade management committees of each union in the district, or the branch committee where no management committee had been formed. These local branches had their own local Emergency Committee comprising two officers and five members, with no trade having more than one representative where there were more than five affiliated unions. Extensive discussion had taken place within the NABTC on the need to tighten national control over local federations and it was agreed that they should be under the direction and control of the National Executive of the Federation on all matters concerning Federation action, policy and finance, with an obligation to submit a half-yearly report on its transactions (46).

Local federations were to consult and and to consider any potential dispute with a view to united action. The

secretary of the local federation was to provide the means of communication with the National Federation and no branch or lodge could withdraw from the local Federation without the sanction of their own EC. (47) Before the National Federation could function effectively it had to assert its authority over the local federations already in existence. Its first moves were in this direction.

It was in Liverpool, a volatile centre of trade union activity that the policing role of the National Federation was most in evidence in its early days. The unions in Liverpool had established a local Building Trades Committee which spanned the whole of the trades in Liverpool and the surrounding areas including Bootle, Birkenhead and Wallasey. Despite the existence of the United Trades Committee, the employers insisted on maintaining separate negotiations for the individual trades as late as 1916, resulting in slower procedures since the unions were obliged to work through two local Conciliation Boards to cover the area concerned, as well as dealing with two Master Builders Associations. (48) Delays in processing the wage claim of 2d an hour, submitted by all the building trades in Liverpool in 1916 led to strike threats in that year, but industrial action was averted by the award of an additional penny an hour. (49) Difficulties could not so easily be avoided in 1918 after the award of 12½% on time rates in many trades outside of building production. The Liverpool operatives acted on constitutional lines submitting their claim for an advance, firstly through the local machinery and then to the Northern Centre Board of Conciliation, who awarded the increase. (50) The National Board, together with other District Boards complained that the new Liverpool arrangements upset other district rates, although the

decision had been reached in accordance with agreed procedures. The government was concerned that the new rate had not been related specifically to the 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ % award in other areas and so telegrams were sent out to all Liverpool jobs under government control, forbidding payment of the increase (51). A reference to the Committee on Production was proposed, but the prospect of the government arbitrating in its own case aroused little enthusiasm amongst the operatives. A mass meeting of thousands of the Liverpool workers was held on May 26, 1918, when they decided, in accordance with the Munitions of War Acts to give 21 days notice of the intention to cease work (52). It was at this point that the National Federation became involved. Their assistance was requested by the Liverpool operatives, but despite the fact that the award had been reached in accordance with established procedures the Emergency Committee decided that: "However aggravating the circumstances may be, we advise that the whole matter be left in the hands of this Federation to co-operate with the National Federation of Employers to take such steps as they may deem necessary to arrive at the best solution of the difficulty and that the Liverpool operatives withdraw their notice to cease work and notify the Government that the whole matter has been relegated to the NFBTO to settle." (53) The application of a national award within the Liverpool District carried with it implications for other areas. Questions of District wage awards ceased to be purely regional in their application, and as their significance was recognised at the national plane, so the attention of the National Federation was directed to the immediate problem of controlling the local branches of the Federation. The issue, in this instance was resolved with only a few minor stoppages, but as emphasis was increasingly placed on bargaining at national level, the problem was, inevitably to recur.

The Liverpool operatives were not easily placated with the assurance that the National Federation was in control. Since Liverpool was, by tradition, a high wage area for building workers the rationalisation and standardisation of rates over wider geographical areas threatened to be a levelling down exercise in their case. The conclusion of the North West Area Agreement as part of the Area scheme, was challenged by the strike action of Liverpool operatives in June 1919. Despite the express disapproval of the Federation's Emergency Committee, the strike was pursued until the North Western Federation of Building Trades Employers conceded that they would reconsider the terms of the existing agreement, provided that there was a resumption of work (54). But try as they might the members of the Emergency Committee could not reconcile the national authority of the federation with the local militancy on wage issues. Executives of the affiliated unions were instructed to exercise all of their authority to get their members back to work and it finally proved necessary for representatives of some of the EC's to go to Liverpool to meet representatives from the local Management Committees. The question of the Area award was referred to the National Conciliation Board for consideration and their award was made on October 24 1919 (55). But the fundamental problem could not so simply be resolved. If the role of the Federation was to settle national wage rates which were relevant to the country as a whole, then the Emergency Committee must contain the militancy of the higher paid areas, harnessing their energies for the national campaign and controlling local initiatives which threatened to throw the delicate balance of district variations. It was in Liverpool that the problems were most acute, but the difficulties were not confined to Liverpool.

The autonomy of local organisation was less closely guarded in other areas, but a certain resistance to the authority of the central bodies of the National Federation was evidenced during 1919 and 1920. Building workers in Edinburgh expressed the view that, whilst Federation was in principle acceptable, they should be permitted to form a separate federation for Scotland and that the amount now being paid to the national organisation by them should be allocated for their own use. (56) In England too the role of the federation was not always appreciated. In Northampton for example, where a local federation had been set up in accordance with the provisions of the NFBTO constitution, men were reluctant to join it. And in London, where as in Liverpool, the Emergency Committee were involved in holding back the initiative for an increase in wages during 1918, there was a reluctance to pass over authority to the national body (57).

If the more militant and better organised areas saw disadvantages in the consolidation of the national federation, the converse tended to be true of the weaker or unorganised regions. A major innovation was made to organising practice in 1918, when it was proposed that a new form of branch organisation should be brought into being, uniting all of the building trades in localities where there were too few members of any one union to establish viable branches of the affiliated unions (58). These composite branches as they were known, were welcomed in the rural areas where little progress had been made in organising building trades unions. In East Anglia it was reported that

"They have been opened in districts unknown to trade unionism and require a good deal of attention as the Building Trade

workers have suffered in these districts for years from that terrible fear, that if they become trade unionists, their employers will have done with their services".

In Aylesbury, Buntingford, Bishops' Stortford, Sheringham, Royston, Sudbury, Stevenage, Halesworth, Yarmouth and Lowestoft 'mass' meetings were held with a view to confronting this "master ridden fever" (59). Here at least it seemed that a form of organisation could be developed which cut across trade barriers, strengthening organisation at a point where craft division might preclude further expansion (60). The Executive Council of the NFBTO had full control over the functions and activities of the composite section. Two classes of membership were allowed. Firstly there were the 'A' members who were directly connected with the section. And secondly there were the 'B' members who still retained a connection with their own organisation, but used the head office of the federation as a clearing house for the payment of contributions. (61) For the craftsman, accustomed to the sectional organisation which dominated the building trades unions, the innovation must have appeared as revolutionary. The composite branches implied organisation along industrial lines, a notion which was certainly not replicated within the scheme for National Federation at the general level.

As a means of improving contacts with local branches of the federation, and with the newly formed composite branches, it was agreed in 1920 that regional bodies could be set up where necessary. Regional District Councils were to be established on the authority of the Executive, and at their discretion there could be appointed a full-time organising secretary for each Council. Each local branch of the

federation was free to nominate candidates for this position, and the National Emergency Committee was to draw up a short-list of three candidates whose names would be presented to the Executive, who were responsible for taking the decision on the appointment. This full-time official was to be the sole means of correspondence with the national executive council, the link between the national federation and its local operations. The establishment of a cadre of officers at this level lent the federation an identity within the regions which otherwise would have been absent. It was especially important in view of the evolution of bargaining machinery for the regions. If the rationale of the NFBTO lay in its importance in bargaining with the employers, it was the more effective for fulfilling this function at the regional as well as at the national plane.

Crucial to the operations of the National Federation was its capacity to exert control over the actions of its affiliates at local level. But it was not directly answerable to its own local branches at this stage, for there was no annual conference separate from that of the Emergency Committee. It was the national executives of the affiliated societies who directed the policies of the Federation, through their representation on its governing bodies and members at rank and file level, could influence federation policy only indirectly through their own Executive Council. An attempt to instigate an annual conference representative of the local branches was rejected in 1919 but it was allowed that some reference must be made, on occasion, to the bulk of the membership. It was agreed therefore that all questions of policy of a national character, affecting large numbers of members should

be submitted to ballot - a move designed to allow a limited expression of membership opinion on the policies of the federation (62). Clearly decisions as to what constituted questions 'of a national character' and what affected 'large numbers of members' remained in the hands of the Federation's governing bodies. The formulation of the questions to be put also rested with the Executive or the Emergency Committee so that the procedure was designed to curtail, rather than to encourage the formulation of policy in line with the expressed views of the members. At its inception at least, the federation was designed for liaison at the level of existing union leadership although on local issues it formalised arrangements for contacts between trades.

It was intended that the federation should provide, from its inception some control over the structural changes affecting unions in building production. Recognised by the employers and the government at national level, it restricted affiliations to national unions and in principle (although not always in practice) allowed membership only to the major organisation for each trade or occupation. The membership of two societies of carpenters and two societies of bricklayers was tolerated since it was expected that they would merge. But the federation's authority was used in the case of a local bricklayers' union, based in Sheffield, which was refused affiliation and advised that members should join one of the national unions organising in their trade (63). Similarly applications were refused from the Operative Glaziers and Assistants, but it was in relation to the organisations of labourers and semi-skilled workers that the most difficult questions were raised. The intention of the leaders of the craft societies was that, by restricting the affiliations

from the labourers' societies, those bodies which recruited solely amongst builders' labourers and navvies would be forced to amalgamate (64). This would provide a unified organisation of builders' labourers, which would be in a stronger position to recruit than the general unions which also were established within the industry. Two organisations of builders' labourers were allowed membership on second application - the Navvies, Builders, Labourers and General Labourers and the United Order of General Labourers (65). But their affiliation was allowed conditional <sup>on</sup> ~~to~~ the conclusion of successful discussions between the builders labourers unions regarding amalgamation (66). It was the initiative of the Navvies Union respecting the establishment of separate bargaining machinery for the civil engineering industry which undermined the projects of the craft leaders for amalgamation of the labourers' unions. Their influence over the labourers derived from their control of the bargaining machinery and from the position of the NFBTO as the recognised negotiating body on the union side. Once this was shaken by the creation of alternative bargaining machinery the possibilities for influencing the labourers' unions to merge were seriously reduced. Discussions between the labourers' societies were continued for the moment but the prospects for a successful outcome were not propitious (67).

#### Building for war production

War production disrupted completely the pattern of employment and the trade union organisation which prevailed in building operations in 1914. Firstly the impact was effected through the departure of many of the younger operatives to the forces, leaving those over the age of 31 to man the industry for the duration of the war (68). It seems likely that in the early

months of the war, when unemployment was high in this sector and when popular enthusiasm for the war was still widespread, the younger operatives may have experienced an economic as well as an ideological pressure to join up (69). Secondly it is apparent that the direct involvement of government in commissioning building works, in the context of military requirements meant that the production which was undertaken was completely different in type to that which was pursued during peace time. The construction of military hutments for troops or the erection of factories for munitions manufacture placed a premium on speed, and a lesser value was attached to the range and quality of craft skills which might be deployed in other periods. The work which was undertaken was more routine and repetitive and temporary dwellings were erected in areas where the shortage of accommodation was most acute (70). Thirdly, the relocation of building work, outside of the main towns, sometimes in the more remote regions of the countryside posed enormous difficulties, both for the government and for the trade unions. The problem confronting the government was the recruitment and retention of labour in these isolated spots. Before any hutments were begun - as early as August 1914, the London organiser of the ASC&J offered the services of the union as a means of supplying labour to any part of the country for work of this type. The intention was that, by retaining control of the supply of labour the union would be able to ensure that these new sites were organised and controlled by their members (71). It was apparent even at this stage that if building work were centred in regions where the unions had little or no presence, they could be organised effectively only through a control of the labour supply at the central level.

The question of maintaining trade union organisation on these new sites was central, both for the rank and file activist, and for the trade union leader to the struggles of the war years. Existing branches were depleted of their activists and officers by the dual disruption of military service and military building. And in the new centres of military production it was essential to reconstruct the framework for trade union organisation if the principles and policies on which those trade unions operated were to be sustained for the duration of the war. It was for this reason that there was an extensive commitment from the national headquarters of the unions concerned to the supply of labour for military work (72). And the same problem was used to justify the increased number of organisers and delegates whose job it was to recruit over a district or within a particular township where the lack of uniformity in conditions and the obstructive attitude of many contractors or their subsidiaries precluded the development of organisation by the men actually employed there.

The problems inhibiting trade union organisation and the observation of trade union conditions were illustrated by the experiences of the ASC&J camp delegate at the Salisbury Plain camps. Many of the men in the camps on the Bristol side of Salisbury were lodged in Salisbury or Warminster and were taken each day by workmen's trains to the nearest station to the camp on which they were engaged, walking the remainder of the distance, through the mud to their work. Others were lodged in huts at the camps themselves. The difficulties of establishing a branch organisation, in the face of the dreadful travelling arrangements and the scattered locations of the workforce encouraged the ASC&J camp delegate to establish an

'emergency branch' of the Society at Salisbury, collecting union contributions personally, contrary to the normal ASC&J practice, and encouraging the men to set up Camp Committees to deal with the problems of their particular Camps. The appalling absence of welfare facilities, particularly for the men who were lodged at the camps themselves was compounded by the wet weather which was abnormally bad during the first winter of the war (73). Union members were often misled about the conditions which they could expect on camp jobs and not surprisingly there was exasperation at the shortage of accommodation, the poor quality of the food, the verminous beds, the wet blankets and the absence of medical attention. Attempts to build trade union organisation, both in the camps and in the locality, met with resistance, and then with outright hostility from the authorities in this situation. The camp delegate was confronted, during a meeting with a foreman, by a posse of military police who escorted him off the camp as far as the nearest railway station and refused him subsequent entry (74). Whilst another delegate was subsequently allowed on the camps, it is clear that the employers were resistant to trade union organisation at site level. However respectable the image of the unions nationally, their presence on camp jobs could be sustained only by the efforts of national delegates committed to organising on a full-time basis. Apart from the work on Salisbury camps the ASC&J appointed organisers to work on camps in Southampton and Winchester; in Birmingham and Oldham; in Edinburgh, Hartlepool, Liverpool and London (75).

The OBS was also committed to the appointment of full-time delegates to organise at site level. Work on the construction of a large cordite factory was begun in Gretna in August 1915.

By October there were some 15,000 workers on the site, where building work was initiated, not only on the factory itself, but also on accommodation and public buildings appropriate to a centre which it was expected would employ from 10,000 - 15,000 workers (76). The primary problem was one of site organisation and in October 1915 a full-time organiser was appointed to the job by the OBS (77). The major difficulties derived from the employment of non-union labour and the lack of liaison between contractors which made negotiations for standard trade union wages and conditions almost impossible. More generally at district level the OBS established a number of organisers by the beginning of 1917 who were responsible for recruiting and developing organisation in the changed circumstances of the war. Organisers were able to pursue the question of wages negotiations, encouraging the observation of agreed wage rates and assisting with claims for improvements.

Government involvement in building production was crucial to the move towards the standardisation of wage rates over the whole country. In 1915 an interdepartmental committee was set up to link the various contracting departments in reviewing wage issues. (78) Its powers were limited and the problems at Gretna and at other sites illustrated the difficulties of enforcing district rates where contractors moved into an area where trade union organisation had previously made little impact, recruiting their own labour on their own terms. An appeal was made by the building trade unions to the Government to ensure that contractors observed the agreed rates and a scheme was established in 1916 allowing the Interdepartmental Committee to intervene in the agreement of district rates, with provision for reference to arbitration if no agreement was reached. (79) District rates and conditions, once formalised

along these lines provided the basis for a more systematic and standardised approach to the settlement of wages at the national level, since the justification for adjustments, in terms of the impact of price increases as well as the method of settlement through arbitration, invited comparison which was national in scope.

Comparison with the experience of engineering craftsmen is less relevant to an account of the problems confronting building trades operatives in the war years than it is say to the aircraft woodworkers. The obstacles to trade union organisation posed by the casual employment and the shifting location of production was nothing new for the building trade worker. But the significance of war-time production lay in the heightened impact of these problems as government intervention forced the reorganisation of building production according to military requirements. The identification of stewards on sites related to the question of trade union organisation and the need for card checks to be conducted. The responsibilities of the steward were defined by the problem of sustaining organisation and ensuring the observance of agreed rates and conditions for the district. Stewards were not obliged to negotiate on questions of piecework payments, since the traditional adherence to the plain-time rate was maintained and their commitments lay in quite another area. Organisers and stewards worked in tandem to boost recruitment and organisation and there was less reason for conflict between the full-time official and the lay activist than within engineering, where workshop organisation did not accord with the formal provisions on trade union structure. (80)

## Building Trades Woodworkers in Aircraft Production

For woodworkers involved in aircraft manufacture, the novelty of the industry, and its vital part in the war effort raised tricky bargaining issues. The employers who were, for the most part, members of the Engineering Employers Association, rather than members of the NFBTE contended that 'aircraft' was a section of the engineering industry and should not in consequence be paid at the rates or in accordance with the conditions set down for the building trades (81). This ambiguous status combined with the absence of established conditions to stimulate widespread unrest. The major problem concerned the system of payment which was to be adopted. Piecework had been accepted within the engineering industry following the lock-out of 1897, but it had never been regarded as an acceptable form of payment for the building trades who adhered to the plain-time system. If pbr were accepted in aircraft manufacture, its introduction in shipbuilding and housebuilding for building trades operatives would certainly be eased. The problem was complicated by the fact that some of the craftsmen accepting employment on aircraft manufacture were members of unions which allowed piecework, although the majority were from organisations which, like the ASC&J, were opposed to the system (82). The absence of established bargaining arrangements combined with the introduction of pbr in many aircraft establishments to stimulate discontent. The agitation escalated during the war in centres such as London, Bristol and Manchester as woodworkers, realising the demand for their skills, asserted their right to an appropriate level of remuneration.

In the early stages of the war, wage claims were pursued at district level. In the London District, where there were 23

aircraft factories established before the end of 1914, 11 different district rates were being paid to the men they employed. A London District Aircraft Workers Committee was quickly set up to investigate the rates of pay and conditions which were operating at all of the London factories. In May 1915 a claim was submitted to cover all aircraft workers in London. The claim was ignored until a strike was threatened, at which point the government intervened, through the medium of the Chief Industrial Commissioner. (83) The issue was twice submitted to the Committee on Production for a decision and on both occasions the claims of the operatives were rejected. (84) In 1916 a third claim was drawn up, for a standard time rate of 1-0 $\frac{1}{2}$ d per hour, backed this time by a threat to withdraw labour if the claim were not met. (85) A ballot of woodworkers in the London aircraft industry gave overwhelming support to the proposal for industrial action if their claim were not met. Of 2,700 operatives, 2,400 requested their leaving certificates (86). But the government again stepped in and negotiations were arranged between the Ministry of Munitions, the Admiralty and the War Office, and the National (Executives) Aircraft Committee, a body linking woodworking trade unions with members in aircraft production. But before negotiations could be resumed, it was insisted that the applications for leaving certificates be withdrawn. After some hesitation, the national officials responsible for negotiations made a recommendation to this effect, pending consideration of the claim. The result was an award allowing pay increases to all operatives, but making no concessions on the question of a working rule agreement or a standard rate. The principle that the highest prevailing district rate for a woodworking trade should be applied in aircraft manufacture had not been established.

In Glasgow similar claims were pursued, again with the aim that the highest district rate for a woodworking trade should be applied. In these cases too the claims were taken to the Committee on Production and once again they were rejected (87). The decision given at the time of the second London claim (Jan 1916) was cited, and it was argued that the industry was too new to be classified, but that it was undesirable to apply building industry rates to aeroplane manufacture. (88)

The difficulties confronting trade union leaders, committed to the principle of a plain-time system were severe. It was estimated that the system of pbr covered some 40-50% of workers engaged in aircraft production and in some areas the percentage was much higher. In Coventry where piecework was an accepted feature of engineering production, there was little resistance to its application amongst woodworking craftsmen (89). And the variation within as well as between districts made resistance more difficult. The position which was reiterated by the Committee on Production in its awards both to the London and the Glasgow Districts allowed the employers to evade responsibilities under existing agreements and to exploit the differences in background and trade identity of the woodworking crafts recruited onto aircraft work. Even between Government departments there were differences in approach for the Admiralty employed men only on time work, whilst the War Office paid only on a piece work basis (90). Reliance on the awards of the Committee on Production eliminated the possibility of effective resistance to a form of payment which threatened to undermine trade union organisation in woodworking. Little alternative remained to the leaders of the ASC&J, the largest of the woodworking unions, than to build resistance to pbr by consolidating their control over the

supply of labour and over trade union policies in this new and troublesome area.

Negotiations concerning the appropriate rates and conditions for aircraft woodworkers were consequently shifted to the national plane. In February 1916 a conference of the executives of the Woodworking Unions was held in order to review the situation in aircraft. It was agreed that joint action be taken and submissions were made during 1916 to the Minister of Munitions who declared simply that the aircraft industry was controlled by the awards of the Committee on Production.

Further protests were issued at the refusal of the Committee to agree a national code of rules and its willingness to accept the erosion of established working arrangements. A National Woodworkers Aircraft Committee was set up in 1916, both to assist with the formation of local Aircraft Committees along the lines of those already in existence in London and Glasgow, and to pursue the claims already submitted for agreed working rules. It was the National Aircraft Committee which was responsible for negotiations on the London claim during 1916 with the employers and the government. Further pressure for an increase for woodworkers in the early months of 1917, in line with awards made for other areas were met by pressing demands from the Government that piecework be formally accepted in aircraft production for the duration of the war. The urgency of production requirements was emphasised by representatives of the Government in support of their piecework proposals. They were countered by the claims of the National Aircraft Committee for the establishment of plain-time rates and the formation of a National Advisory Committee to deal with labour questions, together with permission for shop committees to be organised in all aircraft factories. (91) In August 1917 the Robinson

Committee was appointed to look into anomalies in the payment of aircraft workers. As the question of aerial bombardment became more serious, so the government was forced to take a closer account of the productive capacity of the aircraft industry. The Robinson Committee conceded for the first time the principle of a standard time rate, to be at the minimum, the highest rate for woodworkers in the district, and in no case less than 1/- an hour with provision for overtime payments. A maximum working week of 53 hours was recommended as part of a code of working rules. But the catch as far as members of the unions opposed to pbr were concerned was that for the period of the war the system of pbr should be accepted, or at least if any member or non-member wanted to work on pbr the unions should not oppose him doing so. These proposals precipitated a crisis within the Committee, for not all of the unions were opposed to payment by results. Some unions favoured settlement at district rather than at national level, but it was the ASC&J, committed in its opposition to pbr which insisted upon, and ensured that a decision was reached at national level after a ballot of all union members (92). The ballot showed a sizeable majority against pbr, but leaders of the ASC&J were torn between the commitment of their own members to oppose the system and the need to preserve a united front between the joint Executives of unions with members in aircraft woodworking.

A national agreement was concluded on Oct 30 1917, signed by the National Aircraft Committee in conformity with the recommendations of the Robinson Committee. Whilst it allowed the principle of time payments, it included a clause to the effect that pbr could be adopted if employers and workers were agreed on the issue. This was tantamount to an acceptance of pbr

where it had already been established or where it could be implemented with majority support. There was in consequence widespread dissatisfaction with the agreement amongst the operatives. And because of its concessions to the principle of time payments, the employers and some government departments objected to its implementation. From the Admiralty it was argued that an agreement which conceded standard time rates could not be applied without affecting wages in shipbuilding yards, so Admiralty establishments were exempted from the agreement. Engineering Employers refused to be party to the agreement, since they argued it would introduce working standards and wages of the building industry into the engineering trades.

(93) National agreement had been reached, but both employers and operatives were reluctant to accept its implications. If the negotiators for the ASC&J had as their objective the maintenance of a uniform resistance to the introduction of pbr, they were limited by the need to balance the militancy of their own members against the resistance of other trade unionists to a serious campaign against pbr.

The counterpoint to national negotiations in these circumstances was the increased activity at shopfloor level. Since the national agreement permitted pbr where this could be agreed at plant level, there was an added incentive for shopfloor organisation and militancy to ensure that this did not happen. There was widespread unrest amongst woodworkers in aircraft factories during 1918. Defence of the national agreement (despite its defects) provided the initial cause of escalating conflict. The Admiralty and the Engineering Employers had already exempted themselves from the provisions of the Agreement, but when the government refused to undertake the implementation for the remaining areas, it seemed as though

confrontation was inevitable. During January 1918 aggregate meetings were organised for aircraft woodworkers in the largest districts and in early February a representative conference was called in Manchester, when a resolution was unanimously passed calling for strike action on February 9th. The Minister of Munitions, Winston Churchill, called for a meeting with the National Aircraft committee and after negotiations which lasted until February 8th, the government conceded the observance and implementation of the Agreement reached four months earlier.

A second issue, national in its dimensions, which generated widespread unrest in aircraft manufacture was the application of the 12½% award made by the government to skilled time workers in engineering and foundry trades. The award, which was announced on 13 October 1917 was intended to compensate the time worker for the erosion of the differential between his earnings and those of the less skilled pieceworkers. (95) It was apparent when the award was made that there would be difficulties in deciding who was and who was not eligible to receive it (96). Discontent was rife amongst those workers who were excluded from receipt of the payment, in particular where those occupations were connected with the engineering industry, for example amongst aircraft woodworkers as well as amongst the building trades. The inequitable distribution of the award was only too evident. Woodworkers employed on aircraft work for shipbuilding establishments received the 12½% from October 1917, whilst many woodworkers engaged in other sections of munitions production had received nothing. In some districts the award had been implemented everywhere, but in other districts some firms had paid and some had not. (97) Given the existing tensions concerning the application of pbr it is not surprising that the question generated a good deal of unrest and the issue

was resolved after the intervention of the NFBTO, only by the extension of the award to all building trades workers including aircraft woodworkers engaged on munitions or government work.

(98)

The turbulence manifested amongst woodworkers in aircraft production during 1918 derived from the accumulation of grievances during the war years. Their services were claimed to be essential to the prosecution of the war, yet they were treated less advantageously than engineering operatives in respect of exemption from military conscription (99). Dilution and piecework payments threatened the basis of trade union organisation and hardly a week passed without a stoppage within one or other of the aircraft factories. Strikes were often short-lived - in Manchester there was a succession of small strikes lasting only a day or half a day during the Spring and Summer of 1918. Demarcation questions played a part in some areas. The Chief Investigation Officer in Bristol stated that:

"There has been and is continual agitation and unrest among the woodworkers and the claims and counter-claims of the carpenters and joiners, the shipwrights and boat builders to various classes of aircraft work keep the whole of these trades in a perpetual turmoil..." (100)

But it was in London that the conflict was most extensive.

Shop steward organisation in engineering production developed a pace during the years of the war. It provided a model for woodworkers in aircraft manufacture, where the unaccustomed scale and continuity of operations allowed a level of shop floor organisation which was almost impossible to achieve in the casual operations of building production. The power of steward

organisation derived from the struggle against the allied problems of dilution and pbr. If the shop stewards movement within engineering rested on the growing importance of wage determination at shop floor level, within aircraft it derived more from opposition to pbr than from its implementation. This struggle was articulated in terms of the quality of output and related in essence to the prerogative of craft control, called into question by the craftsman's location within the aircraft workshop, and by the threat of dilution. The protracted struggle for minimum district rates and working conditions necessitated organisation within as well as between the aircraft factories and in London this led to conflicts over the recognitions of stewards' committees during 1918. (101) The dismissal of a woman steward from the Alliance Aeroplane Co. (Waring and Gillow) in June 1918 provoked a struggle which extended to nearly all of the aircraft establishments in London. The stewards' committee called for her reinstatement, but management refused to recognise the committee and stopped their pay for the time spent in taking up her case. The committee alleged victimisation, and on 26 June some 700 operatives ceased work. The strike was controlled, not by the official London District Aircraft Committee but by an unofficial organisation which refused to comply with recommendations for arbitration and called for an all-out stoppage in support of the victimised steward. By 6th July 26 firms were out on strike. Four days later it was claimed that between 15,000 - 20,000 workers were out, from aircraft firms throughout London.

The struggle was governed by two key factors. Firstly it concerned the recognition of the stewards' committee within the plant itself. It seems likely that the initial sacking was related directly to this question and recognition was

certainly a major issue within the settlement of the dispute, when it was agreed that an elected body of shop stewards should be the authorised channel of negotiations with management (102). Secondly the strike provided one of the few occasions when the building trades unions were affected by the rifts between officials and rank and file which characterised engineering production in some areas during the war years. The consolidation of a local movement of shop stewards through the unofficial Woodworkers Council suggested a level and a type of organisation reminiscent of the London Building Workers lock-out during 1914 and:

"it seemed as though a struggle was developing between the shop stewards and the constitutional union authorities." (103)

The struggle for minimum district rates had contributed to the development of locally based unofficial activity akin to the movement within engineering. But there is little evidence in aircraft production of the broader movement for revolutionary change which was apparent in some engineering centres. If the building trades unions were not, on the whole, characterised by a 'syndicalist' frame of reference before the war, neither were they generally affected by the revolutionary mood of craft workers in engineering in the second half of the war. The exceptions to this generalisation are within aircraft production, where conditions were related as much to engineering as to building work. The unusual continuity and scale of production, when compared with building, together with the novel nature of aircraft work generally facilitated the establishment of shop steward committees. But the focus tended to be the observation of accepted working rules, and on the whole struggles were confined to this framework. In some cases - and the Waring and Gillow strike is one example, the economic issues demanded wider

organisation at the unofficial level, calling into question the relationship between stewards and officials. And in this instance the conflict threatened to escalate. But for the most part the shared objectives of officials and stewards - namely the abolition of pbr and the recognition of union organisation within the new industry, meant that the rift within union organisation apparent in engineering was not automatically extended to building workers in related areas.

The experience of war provided a new dimension to the struggle against pbr for the woodworking trades unions, especially for the ASC&J. Craft operatives were committed to participation in the infant aircraft industry, but they were committed additionally to its organisation and control. Like engineering workers they were confronted by the threat of dilution. But unlike engineering workers they were engaged in a novel production process, where they had yet to assert their rights to control and define particular tasks as within their craft prerogative. Since aircraft production was related in many respects to engineering work, it is not surprising if the independent spirit and organisation apparent in many engineering centres spilled over into aircraft manufacture. But the fundamental difference between the engineers and the woodworking craftsmen was that whilst the latter were threatened by a redefinition of craft boundaries and were influenced to some degree by the 'deskilling' associated with the introduction of semi-skilled labour into the workshops, they were not facing the irreparable breach of craft controls in their traditional sphere of operations (104). Moreover the syndicalist ideology in the pre-war period had found a stronger base in the engineering workshops than it had in the branch rooms of the building trade unions. The revolutionary momentum of the engineering shop stewards move-

ment during the war derived from the interaction of the doctrines of syndicalism and industrial unionism with the erosion of craft controls in engineering production (105). Amongst wood-working craftsmen the ideological commitments, as well as the erosion of craft autonomy had less impact. The war provided a catalyst for new struggles and new forms of organisation amongst aircraft woodworkers but their experience was not simply an echo of the shop stewards movement within engineering. It was more explicitly related to the conditions and traditions within which the woodworkers were themselves located.

In building work, as in aircraft production, it has been shown that the trend, during the war years, was towards the settlement of wages on the basis of national negotiation and this was consolidated, during the period of post-war boom, by the establishment of national machinery for collective bargaining within the building industry. The formation of the NFBTO provided the means, on the operatives' side of joint representation to the employers and its leaders actively pursued the standardisation of wage rates and conditions at the national level. In February 1917, one year before its formal inauguration, application was made to the employers on behalf of the NFBTO for formal recognition as the appropriate negotiating body on behalf of the operatives. (106) It was acknowledged on both sides that there would be problems in the post-war era which required urgent consideration and the report of the Whitley Committee, together with the proposals to establish an Industrial Parliament for the Building Industry reinforced the conviction that arrangements for negotiation at national level should be formally confirmed.

### Building operatives in other industries

Little need be said about the situation of building operatives employed outside of building and aircraft woodworking. This is so firstly because in engineering and shipbuilding, on the railways or in steel production, building trades operatives represented only a minority of the workforce and as such their unions did not direct events. Secondly it is apparent that, at least for the war years, the employment of building workers on maintenance and production in other industries was not directly of concern in the formulation of new trade union structures and new bargaining machinery with the employers for building itself.

The trend towards the settlement of wages and conditions along national lines was evident in many sectors of employment during the years of the first world war. The factors identified within the building industry which pointed in this direction - namely inflation, and government intervention in industrial affairs - were evident in other industries. The war-time situation encouraged co-operation between trades and across districts and negotiations were generally shifted towards settlement on national, or semi-national lines (107). This trend emphasised the difficulties, already apparent before 1914, of identifying and delineating industrial boundaries, for the purposes of trade union organisation and collective bargaining. A joiner might be employed in a railway workshop, or in a cotton factory, in aeroplane manufacture or in a brewery. How far could his rate of payment and his trade union organisation be expected to vary in accordance with these shifts in his place of employment, To what extent could the 'building industry' claim to include all of those operatives employed, via their knowledge of building skills, in sectors of employment which claimed their

own industrial identity. The problem has already been identified in the case of aircraft production, where the novelty of the production process and the number of woodworking craftsmen involved lent intensity to the conflict. And it was in evidence to a lesser extent in other sectors where building craftsmen had established their presence.

Yet if the wartime shifts in employment seemed to exacerbate these difficulties, leaders of the craft societies were concerned primarily to assert the principles on which their negotiations were normally founded. Opposition to payment by results was crucial to their negotiating stance. In shipbuilding there was concern at initiatives by the employers to introduce a system of premium bonus payments - one case where its introduction was effectively prevented was at Messrs. Vickers Ltd. Barrow (108). But negotiations in shipbuilding were conducted via the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions where some unions were prepared to accept payments on a piece work basis. The ASC&J, as one of the largest societies opposed to pbr, was obliged to keep up its opposition, in the face of government initiatives to circumvent the shortage of skilled workmen by this means. (109)

On the railways, the craft unions had a common concern to oppose the industry-wide recruitment which had been initiated by the newly formed National Union of Railwaymen. They were particularly concerned that the NUR had no intention of observing the rates agreed for craftsmen. In consequence the two societies of carpenters and joiners, together with NAFTA and the UK Soc. of Coachmakers and the Scottish Painters participated along with the Boilermakers, the Ironfounders and others, in the campaign to raise the wages of railway shopmen.

Negotiations were conducted through the Railway Shops Organisation Committee of Craft Unions. Agreements were normally reached on a company basis, but the intervention of the Committee on Production ensured the extension of awards from one company to another, so that the effect was to generate settlements along national lines. (110)

In general it was the case that building craftsmen outside of building production were confronted with particular problems concerning their opposition to pbr because of its acceptance in other industries and by other unions. But in many areas there was nonetheless a tendency towards the centralisation of negotiations, often involving collaboration between cognate trades or between the different trades in one industry. Bodies such as the National Aircraft Committee, the Standing Joint Committee on Shipbuilding Trades and the Railway Shops Organisation Committee of Craft Unions drew together unions involved in response to pressure over such issues as payment systems, dilution and labour supply. Within the building industry it was the National Associated Building Trades Council - subsequently the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives which developed and encouraged trade union co-ordination - and it was in this area that the most significant adjustments were made to trade union structure for the building unions during the war.

### Post War Changes

The accumulation of housing problems which resulted from the cut back in house building between 1914 and 1918 ensured a chaotic situation at the end of the war. The need for housing was acute in some areas. In Lanarkshire, especially around Glasgow, Dundee and the Rosyth Dockyards, it was suggested that some

100,000 houses were urgently required (111). In those regions where housing was in short supply before the war the demand was inevitably very high. Agitation over rents during the war forced the Government in 1915 to pass a Bill limiting rents to the level of July 1914 (112) and it was apparent that government intervention in this area was required at the war's end to alleviate tensions which resulted from housing shortage.

(113) The social conflicts before and after the Armistice, together with the heightened strength of the labour movement over the war years - in particular the growth of the shop stewards movement, encouraged Government intervention in an area which provoked such evident dissatisfaction in the working class. Rent controls were continued during 1919 and 1920; subsidies were provided for some smaller private sector dwellings by the Housing (Additional Powers) Act in 1919; and subsidies were to be provided for the expansion of municipal housing through the Housing and Town Planning Act (Addison) in 1919.

(114)

During the elections of December 1918 Lloyd George had promised half a million working class homes in the next three years - an enormous target. The achievement of such an objective required the concentration of resources and efforts to this end. But in the same month that the Coalition Government was returned to power, the building controls established in war to limit private building, were lifted. The consequence was a boom in construction activity during 1919-20, with an increased demand for industrial and commercial building, as well as for housing. The release of the demand accumulated over war-time led inevitably to shortages of materials and labour. Schemes for dilution met with little enthusiasm

amongst the building trades unions. The industry was depleted of women as production was re-oriented to peace time needs and having rid themselves of this war-time problem, building craftsmen were unlikely to favour dilution in another (and possibly more lasting) form. Yet for a brief period building activity flourished, with low levels of unemployment and a high commitment to new starts, both in the public and the private sector. In the nine months after the Addison Act was passed, local authorities undertook commitments to build 162,000 houses, sanctioned by the Ministry of Health. (115)

The post-war boom was short-lived. The slump which followed had a serious impact on building activity. Price rises and shortages of materials and labour discouraged new building, whilst the slump in the economy more generally proved a disincentive for new building in the industrial and commercial field. It was in this context that the Government cut expenditure on housing, cutting along with it any possibility of satisfying the urgent need for housing within the working class. And it was against this background that national negotiations within the building industry were consolidated.

The breakthrough to settlement on national lines was finally made in 1919 with an agreement on the establishment of a forty four hour week for the building industry. The claim was first submitted via the NFBTO in January 1919, with a request that a shortened working week come into effect from May of that year. (116) It coincided with a release of the floodgates of demand for building work of all types as the war ended, and with it the controls on building output. The unions feared that employers would turn to high overtime and increased hours to boost output. The regular unemployment which hit building workers because of casual employment and seasonal fluctuations,

as well as in consequence of the longer cycle of boom and slump, encouraged the forward move on the question of hours at a time when the bargaining position of the union side was relatively favourable. The claim for a forty four hour week was first discussed in March 1919, when the NFBTE conceded that an average 44 hour week could be worked during the winter months, but insisted on a 46½ hour week in summertime. But the operatives were encouraged by the concession of the Scottish building employers who agreed the claim (117). A ballot of union members was held on the issue, resulting in a large majority in favour of pursuing the claim and in July it was referred to the National Conciliation Board for consideration. The equal balance of representation between employers and operatives inhibited progress on this issue, as on so many others. The employers agreed to consult their members and return to the Board in September. Their tactic was to postpone consideration of the question until the bargaining strength of the operatives had been undermined by a slow down in the rate of new work and to this end they suggested that the local autonomy which had previously been upheld ought not to be breached by agreement at the national level. Local agreements were still in operation and could not be by-passed without the consent of all of the parties concerned, the employers argued (118). But it was clear that, since the employers had already entered into negotiations on the question of a national agreement for a forty four hour week, they had implicitly condoned an adjustment in bargaining arrangements, accepting, at least informally the need for a national agreement for building production. Their disagreement was with the content rather than with the method of considering the proposal, and in presenting their case to the NCB they argued at both levels. With the backlog of demand accumulated during the war years, and a high level of

combativity amongst building operatives as amongst other sections of the working population during 1919 concessions from the employers were in order. At the next meeting of the Conciliation Board it seemed that little progress could be made, but a resolution to the effect that a forty four hour week should be introduced as of May 1st 1920 was finally accepted.. (119)

The agreement on the forty four hour week was significant for the building trades unions for two reasons. Firstly it was in itself a considerable improvement even on the best prevailing standards in respect of working hours in the building trades and for the less well organised and lower paid rural areas represented a substantial reduction of the working week(120). It was in advance of concessions made in other industries during the same period - in engineering for example the working week was set at 47 hours and it could justifiably be claimed that:

"the securing of the 44 hours week by the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives was easily the most significant success that has resulted from federated action." (121)

If its introduction was postponed and its operation jeopardized by employer resistance, it represented nonetheless an important improvement to conditions, wrung from the employers during the months of the post-war housing boom. Secondly the agreement on the 44 hour week paved the way for the consolidation of negotiations at national rather than at local level. The war-time strategy adopted by the leaders of the building trades unions to raise the level of wages and conditions of outlying

districts up to those of the major industrial centres pointed almost inevitably to the standardisation of wages and conditions at national level. Whilst the employers' representatives hedged around this question during negotiations on the working week in 1919, it does not seem that they were opposed to the reorganisation of collective bargaining along national lines. Indeed it could be argued that the major concession made in respect of the 44 hour week was an indication of their positive commitment to reformulating the bargaining machinery in this way. Such a significant improvement in conditions for all of the operatives represented in negotiations highlighted the advantages to be gained by national negotiations and gave credence to the newly established NFBTO which could claim to have achieved the concession. In view of the reluctance to agree the 44 hours on the employers' side it seems unlikely that the agreement was engineered with this objective so clearly formulated. A reduced working week in line with the employers' earlier proposals (that is for a 44 hour week in winter and a 46½ hour week in summer) could still have been presented to the operatives as a major concession suggesting the advantages of national negotiations. The forty four hour week was not in itself necessary for this purpose. And the widespread resistance to its implementation combined with the employers' determination to revoke the concession at the earliest possible moment to suggest that the 44 hour week was achieved by the operatives as a consequence of their own bargaining strength during 1919. It was indeed the 'most significant success' which had resulted from federated action.

National negotiating machinery for the building industry was confirmed by the agreement of June 1920 which led to the

formation of the National Wages and Conditions Council. In 1919 the Federation endorsed the principle of area schemes and in the same year it was agreed that all area schemes be submitted to and endorsed by the EC of the NFBTO prior to their submission to the membership for acceptance - a move which was designed to ensure progress towards national uniformity of wages and conditions, with control over negotiations vested primarily in the NFBTO. (122) In June of the following year the EC's of the trades unions and NFBTO, together with the NFBTE agreed the establishment of the NW&CC, a move which set the basic framework for national collective bargaining. The Council would comprise 19 (subsequently 20) representatives on each side and would hold 2 statutory meetings each year to set wage standards and conditions (123). The rules were ratified in April of the following year (1921) and although the name of the organisation, and the detailed regulations concerning its operation were to change in later years, the vital ingredient, the joint relationship at national level between representatives of the operatives and the employers was now established. It was an important feature of the representation on the operatives' side that it allowed individual unions, as well as the NFBTO, a voice within the Council. The Federation provided the medium for liaison and joint representation to the employers. But it did not do so to the exclusion of the rights of the individual society which had its own representative within negotiations. Joint representation was combined with an individual presence to allow the maximum freedom for craft autonomy. (124)

An essential feature of the revision of negotiating machinery was the formulation of a new national working rule agreement

which was finalised in 1920. The diversity of existing district agreements could not easily be reconciled within the scope of national arrangements despite the trend of the preceding years towards standardisation. A complex national grading structure was evolved to deal with differences in wages and seventeen district variations were established, with provision for districts below the highest grade to make application for regrading (125). Negotiations could take place around the grade of a particular area, with the objective of upgrading lower to higher paid and rural to urban areas. It was recognised that this approach would not always benefit directly the higher paid towns, although it was argued that the improvement to lower paid areas would reduce the flow of labour from those areas into the towns, with its detrimental effects on their bargaining position. But since there were still many towns and villages which had few or no local rules, it was held that the district grading structure which was set up on a national basis would result in a levelling up operation for thousands of members at present outside of any agreed arrangements with the employers.

The significance of the national working rule agreement was not confined to the relationship which it set up between districts. Its novelty lay also in the uniform payment which was set for the wages of different trades. Before 1914 negotiations were generally conducted on a trade basis within each locality and there was no automatic regulation of wage rates in accordance with established links between trades. Differentials varied between districts and were adjusted over time as the bargaining position of craftsmen was affected by industrial and technological changes. In general it was the case that painters were

paid at a lower rate than other craftsmen - sometimes as much as 1d an hour less, but there was no fixed ratio of wage rates between the bricklayer, carpenter, stonemason, plasterer and other trades. This situation was changed by the national war which established the principle of a craft rate which should be payable to all skilled operatives, whatever their trade. The craft rate for June 1920 was established on the basis of an estimated increase in the cost of living of 170% since August 1st 1914. Wage rates were subsequently adjusted in accordance with changes in the Cost of Living Index, so that for every rise of  $6\frac{1}{2}$  points above or below 170% an adjustment was made to the craft rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d an hour, across all of the trades represented within the NW&CC. (126) The sliding scale was an integral part of the national framework, since it provided a mechanism to adjust wages in accordance with national fluctuations in prices across all regions and all trades.

The establishment of the NW&CC was not the only change which was affected in the post-war era. The Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors, a body representing some of the larger employers engaged in construction work, proposed to establish negotiating machinery separate from the provisions of the National Conciliation Board. They contended that conditions in civil engineering were substantially different from those in building work and required negotiating procedures distinct from those which were already operating for building. Their proposals were rejected by the craft societies, but it proved impossible to control the labourers' organisations who perceived advantages in breaking free of the fraternal supervision exercised by their craft brothers. The labourers' societies grew up in a different era and with distinctive objectives to the craft unions in

construction. Unable to control the supply of labour or to assert unilaterally the wage rates which should apply to their occupations, they were organising in an area which, seemingly, was unorganisable. The geographical and industrial mobility of their potential members made recruitment and retention very difficult tasks. The prospect of recognition at national level must for them have been an attractive proposition. Following the rejection by the craft societies of the proposals made by the Civil Engineering Contractors, leaders of the Navvies Union went direct to the Civil Engineering Employers with the offer of a separate agreement (127). This move undermined the strategy of the Federation's leaders which was to reassert their control over the activities of the unions of builders' labourers. If the latter had their own medium for discussions with the employers, separate and distinct from that which operated in the building industry, such control would no longer be possible. A separate agreement for a branch of industry so closely related to building might undermine the controls and conditions established over past decades on behalf of the craft worker. It had the potential at least to legitimise the dilution of craft skills and the working of extensive hours of overtime.

The Civil Engineering Construction Conciliation Board was set up in consequence of the initiative from the Navvies in 1919. Since it was an established fact, the leaders of the craft societies were obliged to suspend their previous decision not to accept a separate agreement for civil engineering and to open up negotiations for their admission to the new body (128). The formation of the CECCB confirmed the division, already apparent, between skilled and unskilled. Its first effects

were on the control by the unions of skilled workers, over the organisation and activities of the unskilled. But in the long-term it laid the basis for the erosion of craft autonomy as organisations of unskilled and semi-skilled workers were able to extend their control, aided by the impact of technological change and the altered requirements of the product market. This first assertion of independence was the prelude to a more significant threat in later decades - that the unions of unskilled or semi-skilled workers might ultimately assimilate the unions of craft workers.

### Conclusion

The National Federation of Building Trades Operatives was formed out of the conditions of war. The shift in occupational location of building trades operatives encouraged the breakdown of the lines of demarcation between crafts in kindred trades. And as skills were adjusted to military requirements so the determining features of each trade were blurred by the adaptation and simplification of production processes. The Federation was formed as the body which united the craft societies and which represented their interests, both with the employers and with government. It was a response to the difficulties posed by dilution and deskilling, by labour shortage and by the application of payment by results to crafts which had identified the plain-time system of payment as fundamental to their union organisation.

The objects of the NFBTO were related integrally to its function within collective bargaining procedures. Organisation between trades at the national level presupposed a national control of the united trades at local and district level. This in turn assumed a formal link between the Federation's national and

local arms. The question of local autonomy was a sensitive one in the better organised areas, but in the rural backwaters, where trade unionism had made little impact, Federation influence was welcomed and composite branches were heralded as a breakthrough. There was less evidence in the building trades of the militancy which characterised the shop stewards movement in engineering during this period. But the rift between executives and the rank and file members, which was highlighted during the 1914 lock-out was a sufficient problem to justify for the executives a form of organisation which strengthened their hand at the expense of the local activists, rendering the local federation subordinate to the national.

If the NFBTO represented craft interests as against those of the unskilled worker, it was the ASC&J which provided the initiative for their defence. It was the ASC&J which had pushed for the establishment of the Federation in 1913 and which was responsible for reviving the Federation scheme just three years later. It was the ASC&J which proposed the establishment of the composite branches. And it was the ASC&J which was most centrally concerned with opposing the introduction of payment by results. Their resolution, submitted to the 1919 annual meeting of the Federation stating that only unions 'working on the plain time rates shall be eligible for affiliation' was withdrawn yet it is clear nonetheless that ASC&J officials regarded the Federation as a means of strengthening collective opposition to pbr (129). The cost to the ASC&J was high. One third of the contributions paid to the NFBTO in this early period came from the largest union, although it had only the same representation as other unions on its governing bodies. When in 1919 proposals were put to the membership concerning an increase in contributions to the Federation, they were rejected by members of the ASC&J. The

issue was settled by an adjustment of representation, allowing the influence of the largest affiliate to be more directly felt within the governing bodies of the Federation. Henceforth the governing authority comprised two EC members of each national union affiliated up to 20,000 paying members and one extra for each additional 20,000 or part thereof. Local branches were similarly reorganised and the change ensured a continuation and extension of ASC&J influence within the Federation, both at national and at local levels. (130)

In the six years which had passed since the outbreak of war, the informal and intermittent liaison between building trade union Executives had been transformed into one of the largest and most effective Federations in the country. Its primary role within collective bargaining was confirmed by the creation of the National Wages and Conditions Council and it claimed a significant success through the concession by the employers of the 44 hour week. It was consolidating its own structure at regional, as well as at local and national level, and appointed its own officers and General Secretary. Whilst its influence and income depended in essence on the goodwill of its affiliates, the new body seemed likely to survive provided that it retained the support of the largest of them, the ASC&J.

CHAPTER 3.

BUILDING TRADE UNIONS AND AMALGAMATION, 1914-24

## Building trade unions and amalgamation, 1914-24

### Pt.1. An epoch of mergers

The years between 1919 and 1924 saw the creation of some of the largest and most powerful of the trade unions which form the basis of organisations still in existence today. In the space of just a few years, the shape of the trade union movement was changed. Craft was brought together with craft to form the Amalgamated Engineering Union in 1920 with a membership of around 400,000 (1). Unions which were organised along occupational lines joined together with unions organising the unskilled, at the initiative of dockers' leaders, in particular Ernest Bevin, to form the mammoth Transport and General Workers Union in 1922 (2). And just two years later, a similar range of organisations, this time including a union catering specifically for women workers, was merged to establish the National Union of General and Municipal Workers (3). It was a period of initiative and innovation in the field of trade union organisation and two factors had combined to facilitate the process of structural change.

Firstly there was the idealism of the pre-war period, when the impact of syndicalist ideas had encouraged the belief that amalgamation of trade unions would strengthen working class organisation. For the active trade unionist - in the building trades men such as J. Wills and Jim Hamilton - syndicalism involved campaigning for the establishment of 'One Big Union' for the industry. Unity along class lines was the aim, and craft sectionalism the enemy, in this movement which, theoretically was to tackle the question of ruling class power by the establishment of industrial and class based trade unionism. The 'One Big Union' was to provide the hammer on the anvil of

industrial and social change, the instrument of working class unity and action. The extent and depth of syndicalist influence have been debated elsewhere (4) and it is not intended here to reiterate the arguments concerning support for syndicalist campaigns, or the significance of the strike movement pre-1914. What must be stressed in the context of this discussion of attitudes towards structural change in the trade union movement, is the spin-off from syndicalism in respect of proposed mergers. For the syndicalist, the 'One Big Union' was a key element in the struggle for working class power. But when campaigning for amalgamation within the trade union branch, or the workplace, many other arguments might be produced in favour of amalgamation. Merger along less ambitious lines would still lead to greater efficiency, with elimination of the wasteful duplication of resources which characterised existing, sectional organisations. It might lead to a reduction in the number of organisers, or more effective use of the time and energies of the existing organisers. (5) It would mean larger, and stronger unions, with greater financial resources, more capable of resisting the attacks of employers, who were themselves combining, aiming more effectively to deal with their workers (6). It was not necessary to accept syndicalist ideas in order to support their campaigns on amalgamation, and when the issues were raised - as they regularly were, before 1914, and even during the war-years, voting and active support for amalgamation could be won for limited mergers, even if there was less sympathy or understanding for the syndicalist concept of the 'One Big Union'. (7)

Not only the lay activists were touched by the earlier campaigns on amalgamation. The advantages of merger were apparent to trade union leaders too where it seemed that it would

strengthen their hand in negotiations. (8) Ideologically the climate of the post-war years favoured consolidation and the far-reaching mergers of that period were carried through against a background of propaganda amongst the membership and widespread general support amongst the rank and file for amalgamation. The question then was not whether mergers might receive popular acclaim, but how far and how fast new structures might be created. A sympathy for the ideology of amalgamation did not resolve the ever-present pragmatic considerations, which were to play an important part in shaping the new trade unions.

The second factor which encouraged the structural changes of the post-war years was the impact of war. Common problems faced trade union leaders and in the building industry as elsewhere they struggled to respond to the conflicting demands of government officials and their own membership. The extension of the Munitions of War Act to construction work, and the increased importance of government contracts encouraged co-operation between union leaders at a national level (9). The same influences which in the short term gave rise to the establishment of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives also encouraged renewed attention to the possibilities of amalgamation. The consolidation of collective bargaining at national level in other sectors hastened measures designed to deal with disunity in the operatives' ranks. Discussions between transport union leaders were underway from the summer of 1920 with a view to constructing a new framework for organisation in this area to by-pass the limitations inherent in the existing National Transport Workers Federation (10). Leaders of the construction unions had often stressed that the

two methods of adapting structure - by federation and by amalgamation - were not mutually incompatible. Federation was now a reality, but the possibilities of amalgamation had still to be tested.

A commitment to the principle of amalgamation by some trade union leaders was apparent by their participation in the campaign for changes in the statutory requirements governing trade union mergers. The Trade Union (Amendment) Act of 1876 stated that amalgamation of two or more unions could proceed only if not less than two thirds of the total membership of each and every such trade union were shown to be in favour (11). This requirement had hampered past attempts at merger and in 1911 a Bill was introduced into Parliament designed to ease the restrictions on trade union amalgamation, but it was not passed. F. Chandler, G.S. of the ASC&J was one of the leaders most actively concerned with the question, both within the Labour Party and the TUC (12). In 1917 another Bill was brought forward to permit trade union amalgamation where a majority of members of the respective unions gave it their approval in a ballot. Far from wishing to discourage a rationalisation of union structure, the majority of employers and politicians were aware of the advantages which would accrue if the Bill were passed. The situation where several unions represented the same group of workmen created a problem for them since one union might refuse to be bound by decisions, or to participate in joint negotiations or arbitration with other unions concerned. It was Chandler who put the case, on behalf of the TUC to the Ministry of Labour in connection with the Bill. Opposition was limited, but it was impossible finally to avoid amendment, such that when it was eventually passed it allowed amalgamation to

to proceed where

"the votes of at least 50% of the members entitled to vote, .. are recorded and on the votes recorded those in favour of the proposal exceed by twenty per cent or more the votes against the proposal."

The pressure of trade union leaders, combined with 'the new spirit that is abroad between capital and labour' to enable the passage of this legislation which governed the amalgamations of the post-war years. (13)

Amalgamation discussions proceeded between two very different groups in the building industry during the years under consideration. Firstly talks took place amongst kindred organisations, representatives of woodworkers' unions discussing merger with other woodworkers, bricklayers with bricklayers and so on.

Secondly, talks took place across traditional craft boundaries, along the lines suggested by advocates of the 'One Big Union'. Hence there were merger discussions between leaders of unions of labourers and craftsmen, or between different categories of craftsmen. It is essential, in considering the patterns of structural change during these years to consider both types of negotiation on amalgamation - between kindred trades, and across traditional demarcations, in order to establish the scope and the dynamic of the mergers which were finally brought about. Three types of merger proposals between kindred trades will be considered - between woodworkers, between trowel trades, and between labourers. Attention will then be given to proposals for merger on a grander scale - to further discussions of 'One Big Union', and to the possibility of an amalgamation which

crossed craft boundaries. Finally some attention will be given to the nature of mergers which were realised in this period, and to the problems which were confronted before they could be established.

#### Pt. 2. Woodworkers and amalgamation

Joint concern with mutual problems by the woodworking trade unions during the war years laid the basis for subsequent discussions on amalgamation. Particularly important to the craftsman was the relationship between skilled and semi-skilled and it was in defence of this, most basic of demarcations, that boundaries between different categories of skilled woodworkers, between carpenter and cabinet maker, joiners and pattern-makers were lowered. It was in the aircraft industry, a central area of employment for woodworkers, and a newly developing industry in which standard terms and conditions of work had still to be established that changes were most profound. In some instances, cabinet makers, coachmakers, joiners and pattern-makers worked together on different kinds of woodwork without any question being raised as to which section should 'claim' the work as their own (14). Efforts were made to establish uniform conditions of employment in this type of situation, since, it was argued, demarcation may have appeared to benefit some craftsmen, but in the final analysis, it was the employer who was the main beneficiary (15). An increased tolerance was appearing for the movement of craftsmen from one area of skilled work to another, and this, in its turn, seemed to encourage consideration of, and receptivity towards amalgamation across traditional demarcations within kindred trades. This did not mean that craftsmen were more likely to accept an erosion of the traditional demarcation between the skilled and the semi-skilled. It was

feared that, if semi-skilled workers were allowed to take on areas of work traditionally undertaken by the craftsmen, and admitted into the craftsmen's unions, the lines of demarcation would become irremediably blurred - with disastrous consequences for the skilled man. (16) As craft unions drew together in defence of their skilled status and against the risk of dilution, and particularly where they had a common aim in abolishing systems of payment by results, so they established common interests, paving the way for - sometimes leading directly to consideration of the question of amalgamation (17).

It was the ASC&J which was central to the discussions on merger conducted after the amendment to legislation governing trade union amalgamation. Fundamental to the interest of their leaders in merger was their dual opposition to dilution and to payment by results. The NFBTO had been formed as a means to extend their influence, through all of the building trade unions in respect of these fundamental principles. And once the legislative path was cleared they pursued their objective through the strategy of amalgamation with other woodworking societies as well as through federation. Frank Chandler retired in 1918, but his place was taken by A.G. Cameron, formerly a shipping delegate in the London area, who upheld the prevailing policies on the payment system, and the craft orientation of the society. As the largest of the unions recruiting amongst woodworkers, the ASC&J became, almost inevitably, a dominant influence as negotiation on merger proceeded. But Cameron, like Chandler, was concerned with the amalgamation question as a means of strengthening his own hand with the employers. This necessitated reinforcing his position within the trade union movement and within his own union. Control at the national level over

the form and the method of the payment to be adopted required an extension of organisation wherever woodworking processes were undertaken. In pursuit of these objectives, negotiations were conducted with four other major woodworking societies.

The first of these was the Amalgamated Union of Cabinetmakers, a national union since 1833 (18). This was a small, artisan based organisation, numbering in 1915 some 3,500 members (19). Recruitment was amongst handicraft and skilled workers engaged in cabinet manufacture, and it is not surprising that, during the war years, with the orientation towards war production, and the emphasis on output of woodwork for aircraft, shipbuilding, for military hutments, or for munitions boxes, the specialised constituency of the AUCM was undermined. No longer could the distinction be so readily maintained between the cabinet maker and other sections of woodworking. Talks were initiated between F. Smith, General Secretary of the Cabinet Makers, leading members of that union, and representatives of the much larger ASC&J. By June 1917 proposals for amalgamation had been drafted, and these were submitted to the members just three months later. The merger, which represented a take-over by the ASC&J of the smaller union, was to allow flexible arrangements for the existing members of the AUCM. The new union was to be known as the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Cabinetmakers and Joiners. Members of the AUCM could decide between their present contributions and benefits and those of the ASC&J, but since the benefits of the latter were, on the whole, better than those operating within the AUCM, it seemed likely that a degree of standardisation would speedily be achieved. (20) Provision was made for special representation of the AUCM on the General Council of the ASC&J for a period of three years following the merger, and on Management or

District Committees for one year and arrangements were made to retain the services of the General Secretary and the Assistant Secretary within the new union. (21) Voting on the scheme took place under the provisions of the amended legislation governing trade union amalgamation and both unions achieved an overwhelming majority in favour of the proposals (22). On April 1st 1918 the formal inauguration of the ASCC&J took place - one of the only mergers of building trade unions to be finalised during the war. (23) A smaller union, the Scottish Cabinet Makers Association, was assimilated at the same time, but since it numbered only thirty members, no major problems of adjustment were envisaged! (24)

The merger of the AUCM was followed by the amalgamation of the GUC&J and the ASC&J, to form the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, a body which formally was brought into existence from Jan 1921 (25). The courtship between these two had been prolonged, and occasionally acrimonious, but, by the early war years it was apparent that the smaller union could not retain its independent status indefinitely. Whether in negotiations with the government concerning the introduction of piece work, on dilution, or on future housing policy, it was evident that the size and impact of the ASC&J, in joint negotiation alongside its smaller rival, offered little scope to the GUC&J for the maintenance of its autonomy. There was a strong, syndicalist based movement in favour of amalgamation amongst members of the ASC&J by 1916. It was argued, perhaps optimistically, that the desirability of merging the two unions was supported by the most enlightened members of each of them (26). In London a conference was held to consider ways and means to promote the fusion of the two unions and an action committee was formed to encourage the movement in favour of

merger (27). On Clydeside too a conference was initiated by local District Committees, attracting a range of woodworking trade unions, and if branch resolutions are any indication, it seems that, at least within the ASC&J, merger of the two unions was strongly favoured (28).

Within the GUC&J, the matter was a cause for some contention. William Matkin, GS of the General Union held the view that amalgamation was not appropriate during war-time, but would be essential once peace was restored, when the various trades would need to draw together against the possibility of an attack by employers (29). An invitation to discuss amalgamation, issued by the General Council of the Amalgamated Society during the summer of 1916 was rejected by officials of the smaller union, for three reasons (30). Firstly they argued, members of the GUC&J serving in the forces would be disenfranchised if a vote were taken during war-time. Secondly, it was noted that previous voting had not produced the requisite numbers in favour of merger, and finally it was stated that there was no wish to take a vote during the period of the war, but that this might be done once peace was restored (31). Further discussions it seemed, would be fruitless. But following the passage of the Trade Union Amalgamation Act, and the successful merger of the AUUCM into the ASC&J, the invitation to the General Union's representatives to discuss amalgamation was renewed (32). Attitudes in some quarters were still ambiguous. The relative sizes of the two organisations meant that merger, at the grass-roots level would almost inevitably appear as a take-over bid, a 'heel-in-the-neck kind of business', where 50 or 60 members of the General Union in one locality tried to hold their own

against some 12 lodges of the kindred society, representing perhaps some 3,000 members. (33) By January 1918, the EC of the GUC&J had indicated that they were willing to discuss the matter with the Amalgamated, but they found themselves in conflict with their own General Council, who clung to the position adopted in 1916, that merger should not be discussed until the war had ended (34). The conflict was in part a geographical one, pitting London members of the General Union, from whom the EC was elected, against members, and their representatives from the provinces (35), on the General Council.

London members of the General Union had, in the past given support to amalgamation campaigns (36), and it seemed that the London District Cttee was influencing members in favour of merger (37). The matter was sufficiently serious for some members of the General Council to suggest the removal of the general office from London, a manouevre which was designed to produce a new EC, less sympathetic towards the proposed merger (38). Bros. Baker and Sharpe, members of the EC, both agreed to renounce their position on the unofficial amalgamation committee which had been brought into being in London, rather than give up their positions as EC members (39). But Bros. Lack and Lewis, GC members who were campaigning for merger, were less compliant. (40) Matters reached a head when an unofficial amalgamation circular was issued, and attempts were made to fine the signatories, including Bro. Lack, of Walthamstow Lodge (41). The branch, situated in an area of strong syndicalist traditions (42) gave full backing to their GC representative, and refused to collect the fine. As a consequence the entire lodge was suspended. (43) But by this stage the war was over, and attempts to move the general office, in order to inhibit

further discussion on the question of amalgamation were postponed, and finally abandoned (44). The conflict was diffused, as members of the General Council announced in December 1918 that they were now willing to abide by the resolution of July 1916, and take a vote of the members on the question of amalgamation (45). The union's Monthly Report was now to be opened up for items on amalgamation. The thorny question of Bro. Lack's fine remained outstanding, but (46) it was clear that a ballot would be taken on the principle of merger, with provision for a postal vote in order to ensure that the vote was as broad, and as representative as possible (47). When the votes were reported in the autumn of 1919, it was apparent that half the battle had been won. Of a total membership of 14,584, 4,389 votes were recorded in favour of continuing discussions on amalgamation, with only 1,477 against. (48)

The amalgamation of the GUC&J with the ASCC&J represented the merger of two separate and self-contained trade unions, competing for membership amongst the same class of craftsman (49). Unlike the merger of the AUCM into the ASC&J it involved the establishment of a completely new union, although it was based, in essence on the working of the larger organisation. (50) Their members could be expected to endorse the new society, since it confirmed that they were joint partners with the ASC&J in a new venture, rather than junior partners in a take-over bid by the Amalgamated Society.

In order further to alleviate fears, amongst members of the General Union, that the new union would not adequately represent their interests, it was agreed that special provision be made for General Union delegates to sit on the major governing bodies - one on the Executive, until 1924, and one on the General

Council, until it was due for re-election (51). As regards organisation at District level, in districts in which both societies had a presence, it was established that a new committee should be elected, in accordance with the new constitution, and that the committee should make its own arrangements for the election of local officials. The EC, in conjunction with district officials, would, in time, amalgamate the branches and lodges throughout the country, with a view to rationalising their number (52).

Financial questions were always of paramount importance in amalgamation discussions, and the merger of the ASCC&J and the GUC&J proved to be no exception. Firstly it was necessary to provide that the financial position of the existing General Secretary of the General Union, William Matkin, be assured, and that the position of the AGS be secured for the unexpired term of his office, after which it was to be reviewed by the General Council (53). Other full-time officials appointed to their position prior to the amalgamation were to continue to operate for the period of their appointment (54). A more tricky question was the basis of payment to be made to branch and lodge secretaries. In the ASCC&J they were paid on a scale ranging from 10 up to 250 branch members, whereas those in the GUC&J were paid an equal sum, on a quarterly basis, regardless of membership (55). If payment was made on the latter basis, it would mean a very heavy increase in expenditure, owing to the large number of branches. It was therefore agreed that the amounts currently being paid in each society should be averaged, and paid on a sliding scale basis similar to that which had formerly been applied in the Amalgamated Society, but the arrangement still necessitated a substantial increase

in expenditure (56).

As sensitive as the financial questions affecting the officials, at various levels, within the new organisation, was the issue of contributions and benefits, and the effects which changes could bring to the membership. Entrance fees, contributions and benefits were revised, and the number of sections reduced with the intention of rationalising the basis of organisation without adversely affecting benefits (57). The number of sections was reduced to three, the number 1 section providing full benefits, including sickness and superannuation, for a subscription of 1/6d a week; the number 2 section providing a lesser range of benefits - unemployment, trade, tool, accident and funeral, for a contribution of 9d per week. The third section was intended for apprentices, who could join between the ages of 16 and 20 for a subscription of 3d per week. (58) One of the greatest problems was the establishment of a sound superannuation scheme, for the amounts paid out by both societies on superannuation represented an ever-increasing proportion of their expenditure, and involved members of the relevant sections in payment of levies to support superannuated members. The benefit was to be increased, but, in order to ensure that this was financially viable, it was established that contributions too would be increased, for members of the no. 1 section, but that a special fund for superannuation was not necessary (59). In an attempt to ensure a smooth transfer to the new organisation, it was established that members of the lower sections of the old societies could transfer into the higher section of the new union if notice of their intention in this respect were given within three months of the formation of the ASW (60). Altogether the provisions were designed to encourage a flexibility which could incorporate previous arrangements, whilst

ensuring that the results were not detrimental to any large section of the membership who might have the capacity to block implementation of the merger. Vested interests, whether of full-time officials, branch officers or members, had to be satisfied before merger appeared as a real possibility. The creation of a new set of rules, deriving from features of both of the major constituents of the new union was designed to circumvent such problems, whilst endeavouring to establish a viable financial basis for the operations of the new society.

Political attitudes played a significant part in shaping some trade union mergers, but they were perhaps less important in the formation of the ASW, than in other negotiations on amalgamation.

Both unions were characterised by traditions of craft conservatism, and in neither case did the leaders or officials feature conspicuously amongst the more progressive elements within the trade union and labour movement (61). Both unions, of course, contained a proportion of members who were more actively committed, but it was the traditionalists who dominated amalgamation negotiations, and although some members feared that this might have an adverse effect on the outcome of talks, the composition of the negotiation committees, on both sides, does not seem to have inhibited and in practice may have helped the merger. (62) Both unions were affiliated to the Labour Party, and the ASCC&J already had one Parliamentary representative, W.T. Wilson. It was agreed at the time of the merger that the elected Parliamentary candidates for both organisations should retain their positions until after the next general election (63). The maintenance of the contingent fund, which was operated by the ASCC&J to provide assistance

for members in distress (as distinct from trade benefit paid to members of the ASCC&J) or for other additional activities, was the cause for some controversy, and it was eventually agreed that the fund be abolished, and that the EC have the right to use up to 1% of the contributions to provide for assistance to members of their own or other trades in dispute, or to take legal proceedings (64), in certain, prescribed circumstances. This provided the EC with a means of meeting calls for assistance without resort to a levy which would require a vote of the membership, a power which conferred upon them an independence of membership decisions in circumstances in which membership pressure might otherwise provide an impetus for, or constraint upon their activities.(65) The power of the EC to act on behalf of the society was further encouraged by a decision relating to representation within the Building Trades Industrial Parliament. The EC and GC were to sit in this body in equal numbers, and it was apparent that a decision was necessary as to who, in these circumstances, was to decide policy, in the event of a conflict arising. (66) It was agreed that preliminary meetings between the two Councils should be held, in an attempt to circumvent this problem, but that in the event of no agreement, the EC representatives should determine policy (67). The politics of merger provided a continuity with the past practices of both unions. Amalgamation may have been the ideal of the left-wing and syndicalist elements in both societies, but when it was effected, it was carried through by leaders embodying the craft conservatism of what is described by Postgate as the 'old order'. Affiliation to the Labour Party, and concern with Labour representation were a continuing feature of the ASW. The merger contributed to a

strengthening of the initiative of the EC, as representative of the society in political, as in other affairs. If few political problems were experienced in merger discussions between these two unions, it is because the inauguration of the ASW reaffirmed and strengthened the political Labourism of its predecessors, with a centralisation of control, politically; as in other matters, being consolidated for the new Executive Council.

Within the ASCC&J it was expected that the 'enthusiastic amalgamators' would endorse and campaign for the projected merger with the General Union. (68) This merger had been advocated by the union's activists for many years and no difficulties were expected by the EC, other than the problem of persuading the more apathetic members to record their votes. But when they put the issue to the members, the EC combined it with the question of a partial alteration of rules in readiness for the formation of the ASW. Sensitive questions concerning members' benefits were involved. For example on the question of superannuation, existing rules provided that a member, at the age of 55, if a member for 30 years, was entitled to 7/- per week for life. The alteration to rules extended the age limit to 60 years. Moreover it was proposed that if a member had an income from any source exceeding two thirds of the wages of the district he should be barred from receiving superannuation benefit. It was clear that the EC wished to avoid discussion of some of the less palatable innovations which they intended to make in any case, by combining them with the question of amalgamation and allowing only one vote to cover all of the matters which were raised. (69) A member was asked to vote, not on the principle of amalgamation alone, but on the specific proposals brought forward as a result of negotiations. In rejecting the

proposed terms a member was therefore assumed to be rejecting altogether the project for amalgamation. Complaints were received from several branches for the manner in which voting on the amalgamation scheme was carried out. But it was the smaller branches, in the less industrialised areas, for the most part not associated with the amalgamation movement who were prominent in this respect (70). In the districts more closely associated with earlier campaigns for merger, it was understood that the advantages of the scheme outweighed any losses which might be incurred through minor adjustments of benefits.

When the ballot on amalgamation was taken during the summer of 1920, both societies recorded an overwhelming vote in support. Within the General Union the total vote in favour was 7,467 with 2,749 votes against amalgamation. The total recorded vote of 10,216 represented some 70% of the membership of the union which was declared to stand at 15,000 at that time (71). For amalgamation purposes the overseas membership of the ASCC&J was not counted, so that their declared membership at the time of the merger stood at 129,278. Of this number there was a total poll of 71,374 with 67,141 votes in favour and only 4,233 cast against merger, more than adequate to satisfy prevailing statutory requirements. (72)

Amalgamation was now decided, and the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers was established as of 1 Jan 1921 with a total (including overseas) membership of 160,678 and assets worth some £298,287 (73). The structure, despite the reconstitution of the rulebook, derived, for the most part from the rules of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Cabinetmakers and

Joiners. The rules were to be administered by the Executive Council, a body of seven members drawn exclusively from the craft section, one each for Scotland and Ireland and 5 for England and Wales. Nominations for the EC were made within 7 electoral districts, but members were voted into office on the basis of elections involving the whole of the membership. EC members held office for a three year period, but elections were held twice in every three years, replacing three and then four of the EC as a means of retaining continuity. Members were eligible to stand for re-election. An additional position on the EC was allocated to the GUC&J who were allowed a representative until 1924 (74). The EC, which was to meet monthly had the full power to administer the whole of the rules and could fine, suspend or expel any member, branch or committee. They were to transact the ordinary business of the society and could determine anything on which the rules were silent. Elected by the membership as a whole, they could claim to be more representative than the EC under the previous rules of the ASCC&J. But the breadth of their geographical base created problems in respect of the day to day control of the society's affairs. The intention of the rule change was to combine national representation of the membership with a position of central authority, reflecting and controlling members through the country as a whole. The problem was essentially one of the distance between EC members, and this was, temporarily to be dealt with through the appointment of a sub-committee of the EC, comprising the three EC members living nearest to the General Office to meet 'as required'. It was they who were responsible for reviewing claims for benefits, for issuing voting papers and counting votes. They could appoint deputations where necessary and execute any other minor under-

takings which were essential for the operation of the Society's affairs. (76)

The new Executive retained the powers formerly vested in the EC of the ASCC&J in respect of trade movements. It was stated that 'under no circumstances will any branch or district be allowed to strike without first obtaining the sanction of the EC or EB, whether for a new privilege or against encroachment on existing ones.' They had the power to close a strike, whenever they deemed necessary. And they had, additionally the power to appoint a number of organisers, especially in the lower paid districts, to be paid from general funds and under their own control. (77)

The formation of the ASW was used by the existing leaders of the ASCC&J to widen and strengthen the formal controls vested in them through the union rulebook. There were abundant advantages for the General Secretary in having about him a group of men associated with the creation and administration of central policies. This role was assigned to the new Executive, whose power was enhanced by their status as the nationally elected representatives of the whole membership. Although they did not initially assume full-time responsibilities, their regular contact with headquarters ensured a different level and type of involvement from that which could be expected of the General Council, who met only once every three years. The status of the GC was little changed. It comprised 13 members, including 9 representatives of the UK and one each for the overseas districts. An extra place was made on the General Council until the next election for a representative of the GUC&J. (79) The GC had ultimate power over the EC and if they decided that it

was essential for the efficient running of the society, they could take possession of all books and documents and appoint 4 of their number to perform the duties of the EC pending an expression of membership opinion on the matter. (78) But the increased authority of the new EC undermined the established position of the General Council within the new organisation. No longer could the GC claim to be the only body elected by the whole of the membership. They were now rivalled by an Executive which regularly assumed administrative responsibilities and could establish a familiarity with each other and with the affairs of the society impossible for a body which met only once every three years. (79)

Like the General Council, the Management Committees were retained in accordance with the established practice of the ASCC&J. MC's might be elected for the purpose of negotiating and carrying out local working rules where there were two or more branches in a district. MC's were to have a minimum of four and a maximum of seven members, with no more than seven sub-districts in London from which the London MC should be elected. Any district with more than 4,000 members could elect a full-time secretary. Districts with less than 4,000 members could, with a majority of 2/3 of members voting elect a full-time secretary, with the sanction of the EC, and 25% of the salary in this case would come from general funds. It was the MC (or branch where there was no MC) which was responsible for the election or appointment of delegates to the local Building Trades Federation, to Conciliation Boards and to the Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades Federation. The Management Committee also retained a primary role within the new Society (80), in relation to shop stewards. The development of a sizeable

shop steward movement within the aircraft industry during the war years had forced the official recognition of stewards within the ASCC&J prior to the merger. Shop, job and yard stewards' rules were issued in 1918, specifying that stewards were to be elected in the workplace but accredited by the District Management Committee. Stewards were responsible to and under the jurisdiction of the MC which retained the over-all responsibility for negotiations. (81)

Despite the continuity in rules governing the structure of the MC's, their role was changed over this period as a result of the shift towards national collective bargaining. Previously the initiative concerning trade movements had rested with the MC, and even if they required the sanction of the EC before proceeding with industrial action, they claimed a considerable measure of autonomy in district affairs. Now the responsibility for initiating trade movements was shifted to the Executive Council, and whilst the MC retained its authority in respect of the local working rule agreement, its scope for adjusting local rates was considerably limited. Whilst a formal similarity with the Amalgamated Engineering Union might be suggested in view of the common origins of the two rulebooks, the fact that payment by results had been accepted in the engineering industry meant that there was greater scope for local negotiation. Stewards in engineering were responsible to their District Committees and at a general level the District retained considerable authority for controlling its own affairs. In the ASW by contrast, local initiative was possible only via an application for regrading under the national scheme. The possibilities for movement in this direction were to be fully exploited over

the coming period as MC's sought to improve the position of their District within the national scheme. It was in the better organised areas, those already graded A1 that the scope for local initiative was most reduced. London and Liverpool, which were already at the top of the wages league were more restrained by the new bargaining structure than the less well-organised country districts. Without formally adjusting the rulebook provisions for Management Committees with the foundation of the ASW in 1921, it is clear that the MC's were in a very different position than they had been prior to the consolidation of national collective bargaining. And it was the better-organised centres, those districts where wages were highest which were most seriously affected by the erosion of their authority.

It was not intended when the ASW was formed that it would comprise only the ASCC&J and the GUC&J. The name of the new organisation had originally been proposed in the context of amalgamation discussions between the ASC&J, the AUCM and the National Amalgamated Furnishing Trades Association (NAFTA) (82). The NAFTA was a union of some 14,000 members recruiting amongst carvers, polishers and upholsterers employed in the shop-fitting, shipbuilding and other industries, together with carpenters, cabinetmakers and joiners (83). Other trades which were organised included woodcutting machinists, furniture packers, and plate-glass workers, and the union was distinguished from the craftsmen's organisations by the fact that it had a section for women. Otherwise there was no demarcation line between its various sections (84). Yet in 1917 talks on amalgamation were initiated, and progress was rapidly made. By November of that year, officials of the ASC&J and the NAFTA had agreed on the desirability of amalgamation, had exchanged copies of their

respective rulebooks, and had established a sub-committee from the Executives of each society, in order to draft a full scheme of amalgamation (85). Two major differences should have divided these organisations; the first, already mentioned, is the Women's Section, which was organised by the NAFTA. The ASC&J, as a craft organisation, had never given serious consideration to the recruitment of women, for their membership was derived, predominantly from the craft worker who had completed an accepted period of training at the trade, in order to acquire his skills. Yet the response, from ASC&J negotiators, to the Women's Section of the NAFTA was remarkably acquiescent. The necessity, in the furnishing trades for recruiting amongst this, otherwise undesirable class of labour was conceded:

"In the best interests of the furnishing trades for the purpose of controlling their industry, it has been found necessary to take in various other classes of workers, viz., polishers, carvers, upholsterers, glassworkers and women". (86) The general rules of the NAFTA governing the Women's Section, as well as the rules for 'Emergency females' admitted as a result of war-time conditions, were to be incorporated into the new structure. (87) This was no small concession for a union with the traditions and recruiting pattern of the ASC&J. What then was the motivation? It seems likely that it derived from the other major difference between the two societies. Members of the NAFTA could legitimately, within the terms of their own society, accept piecework. This was the issue which really concerned members of the General and Executive Councils of the ASC&J (88). Two of the three resolutions passed at the joint meeting of these two Councils to consider the question of merger with the NAFTA were concerned with this issue (89). Much of the rationale behind moves to amalgamate or federate with other unions during this period,

within the leadership of the ASC&J, derived from the need to control piecework which was accepted both by non-unionists and (sometimes) by members of other unions. It was agreed, as concerned the NAFTA, that on the date on which amalgamation came into operation, piecework should cease in the furnishing trades and that members of the NAFTA employed in the furniture industry on the piecework system at the time of amalgamation, should, within three months, decide to adopt time rates, or they would forfeit their membership in the new union. (90) This was not merely a concern to abolish piecework within another industry or for other trades. There was a considerable amount of overlapping on trade questions, between the two unions especially during the war (91), and if a control over piecework was to be established then liaison with leaders of the NAFTA was essential, whilst amalgamation would ensure full control.

Other issues regarding the projected merger were agreed with comparative ease, and there seems to have been a considerable measure of good-will on the part of negotiators from both unions. The name of the new society was to be the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers, but the general rules governing this body would be those of the ASC&J. Any member of the NAFTA should have the option of continuing his present rate of contributions and benefits, or of accepting those of the ASC&J. The consecutive years of membership of the amalgamating unions should be recognised as membership of the new society, and existing branches of the NAFTA were to become branches of the consolidated organisation. (92)

The question was put to the members of both societies during the summer of 1918. By July it was apparent that the NAFTA had

achieved a substantial majority in favour of amalgamation (93). But members of the ASCC&J failed to comply with the requirements of the amended Trade Union (Amalgamation) Act, in that an insufficient number of members bothered to vote. In order to conform to the requirement that 50% of the UK membership cast their votes a return of 53,235 ballot papers was required, but only 47,741 members actually voted. A large majority of ASC&J members supported the merger but it seemed to be blocked by statutory requirements (94). It is not clear how much effort was made by the leaders of the ASCC&J to circumvent the difficulties which faced them. Whilst the NAFTA reported the ballot results in July 1918, voting in the ASCC&J was not announced until December during the same year. The delay may have resulted from attempts by the officials of the larger union to ensure that an adequate return was received. But other considerations may have entered into the situation during the intervening period, not least the possibility of consolidating a merger with the General Union, a project which was actively pursued since August 1918 when a sub-committee of the GC was elected to negotiate with the General Union (or any other kindred union) (95).

Leaders of the ASCC&J were committed to the principles of craft trade unionism, involving opposition to payment by results and to dilution. The amalgamation with NAFTA presented them with a difficult choice. Either they could accept into membership many operatives who would generally be regarded as outside the ranks of the skilled workers, aiming, in doing so, to end the application of piecework payments to these operatives. Or they could avoid amalgamation with the NAFTA, but risk the continuation of the payment system to which they were opposed. In view of the popular feeling in favour of merger of the woodworking trades, discussions with the NAFTA were continued during 1919, but it

seems likely that the imperative to close ranks with the semi-skilled workers in that union were reduced by the ending of the war. With the revival of housebuilding activity during 1919 and the declining importance of the aircraft industry as a centre of employment for woodworkers, the logic of the amalgamation with NAFTA was, at least partially, undermined. Consolidation of the two societies of carpenters and joiners was a higher priority in peace time, and it is not impossible that the leaders of the GUC&J, sensitive to the pending changes, may have resisted moves which would widen the base of membership of the merged organisation beyond the recognised boundaries of the woodworking craftsman. As discussions with the GUC&J became more amicable so the attitude of the leaders of the ASCC&J towards the NAFTA became more frosty. An approach from Alex Gossip, GS of the NAFTA to F. Chandler in June 1919 concerning NAFTA representation at meetings of the GUC&J in connection with impending rule changes which were to provide the basis of the merged society was met by the response that no such representation was necessary at this stage. And when the question of voting on the Furnishing Trades amalgamation was considered by the General Council of the Amalgamated Society at its meeting in 1919 there was a minority of GC members who wished, in issuing instructions to members regarding amalgamation for members to be told that if amalgamation were agreed to 'it includes stone carvers, glass bevellers, upholsterers, polishers, japanners and women, all to carry the same card' - a move clearly designed to discourage a positive vote on the question. And although this was not carried, it was agreed 'to place all the aspects of such action clearly before the members.' (96) Not only was the membership base of the NAFTA wider and less skilled than that of the larger union, but its political orientation was very different to that of the

conservative craft societies which represented the main body of carpenters and joiners. It counted amongst its members Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe, who established communities of furniture makers - most notably in the East End of London, and who formed trade union organisations subsequently branches of the NAFTA which were politically to the left (97). And although many of its members may not have shared their point of view, the leadership of the NAFTA was identified by its opposition to the war effort and to conscription. Alex Gossip, the General Secretary, and Fred Bramley, the trade organiser had campaigned actively against the government for the duration of the war. The NAFTA's leadership was active in support for the revolutionary government in Russia and promised to be a political embarrassment to the more restrained leaders of the ASCC&J (98). Politics reinforced craft conservatism in this case, and discussions between the NAFTA and the ASCC&J were taken no further. Not for many years would the Woodworkers and the Furniture Trades come so close to merging their respective organisations.

Negotiations with other woodworking unions during this period would not have been complete without the pursuit of discussions with the Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists (99). This body, with 22,132 members in 1920 was expanding rapidly as woodworking processes were mechanised. Workers came into the industry and developed their abilities as woodworking mechanicians very often, as the result of years of experience, rather than as a consequence of apprenticeship, which was more common in handcraft woodworking (100), and their presence within the industry posed a threat to members of the ASW, whose position at the bench might be undermined by members in the machine shop (101), doing the same, or similar work. Not surprisingly there-

fore there were demarcation difficulties (102) and leaders of the ASW, as it was by the time that amalgamation discussions were underway, were concerned to establish the right of labour to transfer from one process of the industry to another (103), although it was conceded that the woodworking machinist, with no training as a handcraftsman should have some protection in his area of employment when trade was slack. (104)

In view of such innovations in the industry, the woodcutting machinist was not to be easily bought off by the woodworking craftsman. The formation of the ASW had already established a structure and form of organisation into which leaders of the ASW hoped that the members of the ASWM could be slotted (105). But W.J. Wentworth, GS of the ASWM, together with members of his Executive, had their own views on amalgamation (106). A considerable degree of autonomy was required for the activities of the woodcutting machinists within the proposed amalgamation. A National Committee composed exclusively of woodcutting machinists was proposed, together with the continuation of district committees of woodcutting machinists where these were already in existence (107). Far from accepting the dictates of the ASW regarding work on systems of payment by results, officials of the ASWM insisted that, in districts where their members had been employed for many years on this basis - in the carriage building railway shops, in the motor and engineering industries, they should continue to have that option after the formation of the new, merged, society (108). The usual provisions regarding the position of existing officers were required, but in addition Wentworth demanded that there should be elected nationally four members of the Woodcutting Machinists to represent those interests on the Woodworkers' EC, as well as on outside bodies such as the NFBTO and the Engineering and

Shipbuilding Federation (109).

Surprisingly, given the diversity of the proposals emanating from the two organisations, a draft basis of amalgamation was prepared for submission to the membership. The ASW was, to some extent able to carry its position, by maintaining that the new organisation should have one central Executive Council, with authority to deal with all of the members of the combined union. Similarly it was proposed that composite branches be brought into existence, drawing in both the woodworking craftsman and the woodcutting machinist, with the rights of either to transfer their labour from one process to another, although with priority of employment for the woodcutting machinists on machine processes in times when work was short (110). The Woodcutting Machinists were to be represented by two members on the Executive, and two members on the General Council until 1926, when the number would be reduced to one on each body. Provision was made for a National Advisory Council, along the lines proposed by the Woodcutting Machinists, and special provision was to be allowed for representation on some of the larger Management Committees, for example on Clydeside, in the West of Scotland, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Birmingham (111). On the question of piece work a compromise proposal was adopted, whereby all members of the new Society should revert to the system of plain-time working 'at the earliest practicable opportunity' following amalgamation, but no action was to be taken, until 'circumstances and the state of trade are favourable'. (112) The compromises made by leaders of the ASW suggest their concern to incorporate this new class of tradesman, who exuded the confidence, which derived from a knowledge that the machine sector of the trade was destined to expand. Perhaps the compromises were encouraged by the recognition that it was unlikely that the members of either

body would swallow the proposals, and if that was the case then expectations were proved correct. When put to the membership of the ASWM, the proposals were actually defeated, the final vote being:

ASWM	In favour of amalgamation	-	4,540	
	Against	-	5,040	(113)

A section of the ASWM's EC and GC's had deleted a recommendation to the membership to approve the terms of amalgamation, which, they had been promised would be included. Against the background of changing processes which favoured the machinists, the leadership of the ASWM were unlikely to accept a subordinate role within the larger society. The draft proposals were accepted as the basis for a ballot precisely because they could not, in their existing formulation, provide a framework for merger. Since the leaders of the ASWM were not anxious to conclude an amalgamation, reference to the membership provided an effective means of ending negotiations with the ASW.

Political attitudes were less significant, in these discussions than the question of trade identity. Wentworth and the other leaders of the ASWM were scarcely more radical than their counterparts within the ASW. Because the Woodworking Machinists had, for some years been struggling to establish a distinctive identity for their trade, and because they aspired to the controls and status previously associated with the craft organisations, they assimilated the political views and values of the craft societies. Essentially they were supporters of the Labour Party and their moderate outlook accorded well with the prevailing views amongst leaders of the ASW (114). Differences

derived from their assertion of a distinctive trade identity, rather than from any conflict in political views. And at this level compromise was improbable. The two societies continued in their separate ways, untroubled by merger discussions for over forty years.

It is apparent, from the above account, that leaders of the ASC&J, subsequently the ASW, actively pursued amalgamation with kindred trade unions from 1916 through to the early 1920's. Two significant problems had emerged for the craft unions, by the middle of the war, and they are central to an understanding of the discussions which took place on amalgamation. Firstly the changing processes of manufacture during the war years, placed new requirements on the organisation of woodworking production. Demand for labour was intensified in the lesser skilled sectors - in the production of wooden munitions boxes, in the manufacture of pre-fabricated wooden components for army hutments, undertaken on a mass basis, and most important, in the aircraft industry. The reduced skill content of many of these processes allowed the use of dilutees on work which might, according to custom and practice, have been part of the range of activities of the woodworking craftsman. The introduction of female labour was symptomatic of the extent of the changes which were taking place - and of the threat which was posed to the traditional delineation of craft within the woodworking sector. And it is in response to changes of this nature, as well as in the context of the new collective bargaining problems posed by the wartime intervention of government in industrial affairs, and particularly in the manufacture of munitions, that woodworking skills - and along with them the framework of trade unions organising woodworkers - were adjusted.

The second and related problem concerned attempts to introduce payment by results into an industry in which the plain time rate formed an integral feature of the craft identity. The payment system was closely bound up with the form of engagement of the building trades operative. This is to say that payment by the day, by the hour or by the piece define the form of wage contract in which the worker was involved. At the general level it has been established that payment on a time or piecework basis are necessarily related. Payment made on a time basis assumes a certain volume of output and conversely payment on a piece basis assumes an approximate period of time for which the operative is employed (115). Although this assertion has a general relevance for the building trades, it was apparent, as early as the 1860's that the payment system had important implications since it defined the basis on which the operative was engaged - and this was of crucial significance in an industry where employment was essentially short-term. Until 1860 it seems that the building trade worker was usually employed on a day basis - so that he would be taken on or laid off by the day, with the shortest recognised period being the quarter day. But in that year the employers launched an attack which culminated in a move to payment, and to hiring and firing, by the hour. Previously the employer paid for bad weather - but the hourly payment system meant that it was the operative who paid. And whereas the daily payment included the short day on Saturday, with provision for overtime payment where extra hours were worked, the hourly payment eliminated these benefits, to the disadvantage of the operative (116). The introduction of payment by results threatened to worsen this situation by defining the period of engagement in relation to the period necessary for the completion of a certain task or range of tasks. Since the work would vary from job to job, it seemed likely that

negotiations would, as a result of pbr be conducted by an individual worker or group of workers, rather than by a body representative of the trade as a whole. The same problems were apparent in engineering where the result had been

"a chaos of inconsistent customs and practices varying from shop to shop; and withal a tendency to a continuous decline in piece-work rates." (117)

The ASE, as the largest of the societies of skilled engineers, had encountered considerable difficulties in evolving a uniform position on trade matters with the smaller unions in the same field.

The problems provided a momentum for consolidation, effected in 1920 through the establishment of an agreement between 6 of the competing unions in engineering to form the AEU. Similarly in the woodworking trades, the problems of the war years - especially the moves to generalise payment by results provided a powerful lever to bring about a rationalisation of trade union structure. It was in defence of the plain-time system of payments that leaders of the ASC&J impelled the structural changes which could reinforce resistance to payment by results. Whilst they were able to assert the importance of opposition to pbr within their own organisation, their capacity to do so across the whole of woodworking production was limited, despite their size, unless a medium for control of members of other unions could be found. Both amalgamation and federation were useful towards this end. And the rationale behind moves towards amalgamation was based, not on the wider theories of 'One Big Union', but on a 'theory' of cognate trade unionism, an assertion of the need for merger to be effected between kindred trades, with common interests .

It was at this level that the need for changes in the organisational framework was identified. ASW strategy was not to alter for some 50 years.

### Pt.3. The trowel trades and amalgamation

Whereas officials of the ASC&J favoured limited cognate trade amalgamation, in conjunction with the development of a federal structure to unite building trade unions, leaders of the major bricklayers society, the OBS, had in the past shown themselves more sympathetic towards aims of full industrial unity (see Ch.1). Before the outbreak of war, they had loaned offices and support to the campaign for 'One Big Union', and although their response was deemed inadequate by some, at least of the syndicalists, in contrast with officials of other unions, John Batchelor, the GS until 1919, and George Hicks, one of the national organisers for much of this period, and Batchelor's successor, were positively in favour of amalgamation. The possibility of an effective campaign for industrial unionism during the war years was limited, but initiatives were kept up for amalgamation within unions catering for bricklayers.

The other major union recruiting bricklayers was the Manchester Unity Operative Bricklayers Society, led by its GS, John Gregory (118). By contrast with the OBS, this was a small organisation (119), and numbers were stagnating during the war years. (120) Financially the union was in dire straits, with some of the benefits showing a constant loss (121), but the level of animosity between the two societies was such that merger did not seem to be an immediate prospect (122). An approach made by Batchelor to Gregory urging discussions on amalgamation met

with an ambiguous response both from the Executive and the membership of the MUOB, but it was eventually agreed, by 677 votes to 597 that negotiations on merger should proceed (123). By January 1916 certain preliminary conditions had been laid down. It was established that, from the date of amalgamation, all full benefit members of the MUOBS should become full benefit members of the OBS except that they would not be entitled to superannuation benefit, since this had not been operated within the MUOBS in recent years, until they qualified by the appropriate period of membership within the OBS (124). After the merger they would, in all other respects, operate on the same basis as members of the OBS, paying the same contributions, for the same range of benefits, and working under the rules of the larger union (125). Particular problems arose in discussion of the matter of superannuation. It was argued by Bros. Williams (EC of OBS) and Batchelor (GS) that superannuation benefit represented a heavy drain on the funds of their union, and consequently, since a comparable scheme was not operated within the MUOB, they felt unable to take members of that organisation directly into benefit, unless an initial per capita contribution was made equivalent to that put up by the OBS (126). Yet negotiators for the smaller union were reluctant to accept this argument, and after some wrangling it seemed that the preliminary conditions for merger would be submitted to the membership as they stood. However a further hitch was raised by the MUOB delegates. What would be the position of their General Secretary after amalgamation? And would they be entitled to special representation on the AMGC of the merged union (127). On these issues too the OBS proved uncompromising. The decision taken by the Annual Movable General Council in August 1916 was to the effect that Gregory, and any other properly qualified member of the MUOB would be

eligible for nomination to any position in the OBS, but no preference could be given to them (128). Perhaps not surprisingly there was little enthusiasm within the MUOB for merger on such terms, and negotiations were, for the time being abandoned. (129)

Discussions with the Bricklayers' Trade, Protection, Sick and Burial Society, a Sheffield based organisation, promoted by former members of the MUOB, were no more successful. Under the auspices of the National Associated Building Trades Council attempts were made to amalgamate this body with one or other of the national unions of Bricklayers (130), and in Dec 1915 it was reported that the Sheffield union had agreed to ballot its members on the question of fusion (131). The results crushed hopes of amalgamation in this direction, for of 300 ballot papers issued, only 8 votes were recorded in favour of a merger (132).

Ironically, the initiatives which precipitated discussions leading to the formation of the AUBTW came, not from the OBS, but from talks on merger between the MUOB and the OSN. The Stonemasons' Organisation had suffered considerable setbacks in recent years. At one time the stonemason had been amongst the best paid and most respected of workmen, part of an elite whose position derived from its capacity to control entry into its trade and to restrict labour supply (133). The OSN had been in continuous existence, since 1834, if not longer (134), and its members had a standing and dignity which separated them, sometimes to the detriment of working class unity, from other members of the building trades (135). The introduction of reinforced concrete, especially on the larger scale public buildings, from the turn of the century had undermined the demand

for stonework, and the mason was soon faced with a reduced demand for his skills (136). The geographical concentration of building work which had been available - and especially accessible to the working mason during the early and middle years of the Victorian era was diminished, as city centres were 'completed' and development shifted to smaller-scale and more wide-ranging developments on the outskirts of the major conglomerations (137). The profound impact of such changes on the life and livelihood of the operative mason were compounded by the effects of the war. It was precisely those areas of building in which the mason was employed - large public buildings, often of a luxury nature, which were curtailed during the war years, leaving the stonemason no alternative but to seek employment elsewhere - very often in munitions production (138). Membership of the OSM, which had declined steadily since 1900 plummeted after 1914 (139). The financial and organisational consequences for the union were disastrous. Amalgamation with other building trade unions - which hitherto would have been unthinkable, was now a real possibility, if not a necessity.

Negotiations with the MUOB were attractive for two reasons. Firstly, because the MUOB was smaller than the OSM, it was likely that leaders of the Stonemason's Society would be able to maintain - and indeed even enhance their position at the head of a merged organisation. A merger along these lines did not represent a 'take-over' by an outside body and it could even be argued that the OSM was 'taking over' the smaller society of bricklayers. Secondly it was apparent that the

leaders of the OBS would like to consolidate their organisation by a 'take-over' of both of the smaller societies. Hence the MUOB and the OSM had certain interests in common and by joining forces against the OBS they could enhance their position in any future discussions of amalgamation of all three societies.

Officials of the Manchester Unity, perhaps not reluctant to associate themselves with the superior Stonemason Society, proceeded with negotiations. Conditions for merger were drawn up and it was agreed that a vote be taken in both societies (140). John Batchelor reported this matter, within the OBS, and it was suggested that approaches be made, via Wm Bradshaw and the NFBTO, in order to participate in the discussions (141). As a result, a conference was held in Manchester in July 1919, attended by representatives of the OSM, the MUOB, the OBS and the Amalgamated Masons and Paviers (AMAP) (142).

Attitudes, at the outset of negotiations, seemed to augur well for a full amalgamation (143), and it was agreed that a committee be set up, comprising two members from each society, in order to draw up terms (144). At its first meeting the committee undertook to define the mainline principles on which amalgamation might be conducted. A new name and a new rulebook were regarded as essential prerequisites for the establishment of the merger. The union was, optimistically, to be known as the Amalgamated Union of Allied Building Trade Workers (145). Its structure was to be based on geographical areas, known as districts (subsequently divisions), along lines already established within the OBS (146). The Executive Council, to be elected on the basis of one representative from each of the nine districts was to elect the President and trustees of the union. The financial position

of the full-time officials of all of the unions involved in the merger was to be guaranteed, and a common fund was to be set up based on a contribution of 10/- per member as an indication of the good faith of the unions represented in discussions (147). The matter of entrance fees and contributions was to be referred to a Compilation of Rules Committee, set up to consider the detail of the new rulebook, although it was agreed that superannuation, sick, accident, death and other benefits should be continued on the basis of the average experience of the societies which were party to the amalgamation (148). At the end of the meeting, enthusiasm for the merger was high. The 'utmost good feeling and confidence' prevailed, and 'everyone present wended their way homewards to spread the good news'. (149)

But optimism and good feeling were not, on their own, a passport to a successful conclusion of the discussions. Towards the end of 1919, voting papers on the general principles of amalgamation were issued to the members of the unions concerned by the NFBTO, and members were instructed to hold special meetings in order that the returns be submitted by Dec 6th (150). Both the Stonemasons' Society and the Manchester Unity Bricklayers secured an overwhelming majority in favour of the amalgamation proposals, but within the OBS, despite a majority voting in favour of merger, the total vote recorded amounted to only some 35% of the membership, and therefore failed to comply with the provisions of the Act of 1917 (151). The Plasterers' Society was caught in a similar predicament, and withdrew from negotiations, but the GS of the OBS, together with Wm Bradshaw of the NFBTO, approached the Registrar of Friendly Societies, and it was agreed that a further vote be taking within the OBS (152). Branches

were again instructed to summon special meetings on the question, and in an attempt to ensure that results complied with statutory requirements, it was agreed that returns be kept open until the March quarterly meeting in 1920, when the votes would be scrutinised.

It is difficult to compare the turn-out for the meetings on amalgamation with branch attendance at other times, since 1919 was scarcely a 'normal' period of trade union activity. The disruption of branch activity which resulted from the war was compounded by the relocation of building operatives as house building was resumed. The return of men from the forces swelled membership figures but the consolidation of the expanded membership in branch meetings and activities was a difficult proposition (153). Yet there is no reason why the OBS should have been more affected by these factors than any other union, and it seems likely that voting on amalgamation was broadly similar in volume to voting on any other major issue during the same period (154).

The leaders of the OBS doggedly pursued the goal of amalgamation. Hicks, now GS, issued a circular calling for merger on the grounds of economy, efficiency and solidarity, and the persistence of the leaders of the OBS in this matter was rewarded when the votes in favour came in in sufficient numbers to meet legal requirements, (155) the result being reported in May. It is ironical that, of the three main unions participating in the discussions on merger, it was in the OBS, for so long the union in which activity had suggested favourable attitudes towards merger, that the voting returns were deficient. The explanation might in part derive from the size of that union, for the larger the union 195

the more difficult it is to achieve a high voting return on such issues. It may be that, because of the history of amalgamation campaigns within the OBS, a favourable return was assumed by members who were not unsympathetic to merger, but who simply did not bother to vote on the first occasion. In any event it does not seem that the majority of members could be counted as 'enthusiastic amalgamators', even where they might generally be favourable to, or acquiescent in the process of amalgamation. But a majority of members were in favour of the merger on the second ballot, and whilst the issue may not have been a matter of pressing concern for many members, it is clear that support for the principle had been won. Meetings of the Cognate Trades Amalgamation Committee were curtailed between January and April of 1920 and resumed only at the beginning of May, when the Compilation of Rules Committee was established to give consideration to the details of merger (156).

Arguably, the chief problem for this amalgamation was one of craft identity, for it was proposed to bring together two crafts, bricklayers and masons, which had hitherto maintained their independence, one from another (157). It is true that in some parts of the country there was already a degree of overlap between the trades, particularly in rural areas. In Scotland and parts of the North of England trained bricklayers were less numerous than masons, who often reserved to themselves the right to undertake bricklayers' work (158). But at least as far as Scotland was concerned, the representative organisation The Scottish Masons Society was not a party to amalgamation discussions, and in England and Wales the question of distinctive craft identities had still to be overcome. During the period of post-war boom it was agreed that members of the bricklayers'

and masons' societies should work together without regard to questions of demarcation, and recognise the card of the related societies, provided that currently prevailing rates were paid to bricklayers engaged on masons' work or vice versa, such that neither craft should suffer a reduced rate as a result of this flexibility (159). This decision called forth protests from some areas (160) although in others members of the different trades worked together amicably (161). But it laid the basis for the operation of one card for both trades after the amalgamation, a solution which was designed to end the wrangles over demarcation (162).

The situation was complicated by the fact that the OSM had, in recent years opened up membership of the society to quarrymen and some labourers in related work (163). Since the other societies did not recruit labourers, it was necessary to decide whether these members should be admitted into the new union, or should be handed over to another organisation recruiting in that field (164). A number of the quarrymen were semi-skilled, and an agreement had been reached with the employers that these men should receive a rate only 1d below that of the craftsmen. It was feared that by transferring them to a society such as the 'Altogether' Builders Labourers, which might seem more appropriate, they could lose this benefit (165). This question pointed to the wider issue of organisation on industrial lines.

How far was it intended that the new organisation should recruit outside of the sphere of craft work in bricklaying and masonry? To what extent was the new union to form the basis of a larger movement of amalgamation towards one union for the whole of the building industry? (166) Moves to extend the scope of recruitment to labourers had little support during the discussions,

and it was agreed that arrangements might be made for the transfer of all labourers already organised (167) into a labourers' union. A sharp line was drawn between the semi-skilled workers, engaged on monumental work or in the quarries, and members who were labourers. (168) George Hicks paid a personal visit to Portland, where the majority of members in quarries were based, and it was subsequently agreed that it was necessary to retain the specialised semi-skilled men in the union and to continue organising in the quarry districts (169). The distinction which was made, between the skilled or specialised worker on the one hand, and the labourer on the other, was one which was to define the new union, whatever its title and other provisions, in terms of the traditions of craft organisation of its major constituents.

A common obstacle to amalgamation was the resistance of full-time officials, many of whom might fear the loss or threat to their positions in a new, and larger structure. In the context of the expanding membership and relatively stable financial climate of the trade unions in the immediate post-war years (170), this difficulty was not insuperable. It was agreed early on in discussions that the financial position of the full-time officials of all of the unions was to be guaranteed when the merger was completed. George Hicks, who had replaced John Batchelor as GS of the OBS in 1919 was elected as GS of the new union at a salary of £600 p.a. free of income tax, and with provision of accommodation (171). The existing general secretaries of the other two unions, Williams of the OSM, and Gregory of the MUOB, were to be taken on to the staff of the Amalgamated Society as chief officers of their respective trade departments, under the control of the EC and the GS, and were each to be paid a salary of £450 p.a. with free housing or

payment in lieu thereof (172). Other existing full-time officials were to be taken over and placed in positions in accordance with the direction of the Executive, and organisers would, ordinarily be subject to re-election every three years from July 1st 1922, on a geographical basis (173). In view of the successes achieved in some areas by the local appointment of a walking delegate, it was agreed that, where proof could be shown of the need for such an appointment in a locality, the Society should pay 25% of the salary of the delegate in order to assist local organisation (174). The question of the payment of the salaries of branch officials was more sensitive. In some branches members joined mostly on a trade only basis, whilst in others the majority paid for friendly benefits in addition to trade. Secretaries in the latter branches undertook a greater volume of work than those in the former type, and it was intended that the payment which they received should differentiate between the two (175). Every effort was made on the part of the negotiating team to ensure that the interests of full-time and branch officials did not stand in the way of amalgamation. Many full-time officials were, in fact, enthusiastic proponents of amalgamation. George Hicks, in particular, adopted the slogan 'More unity and fewer unions', and was responsible for pushing the campaign forward when the outcome seemed to be in doubt (176) both within his own union (177) and in the face of difficulties raised by representatives of the other two unions (178). As GS of the largest of the amalgamating unions, Hicks could proceed with some confidence in the likelihood of filling a similar position in the amalgamated society, and it might, therefore be argued that he had a vested interest in seeing the merger effected. But other officials, with perhaps less prospect of improving their position, spoke enthusiastically in favour of amalgamation and seemed concerned to eliminate, rather than to

create obstacles to the 'forward movement'. (179)

Nonetheless the last minute difficulties which arose must be attributed in part to dissatisfaction by leaders of the OSM and the MUOB with their position within the projected structure. Whilst the GS's of all three unions had been represented within the Compilation of Rules Committee, it was agreed at a meeting of EC's and organising staffs of the unions, held in Nov 1920 that pending the election of members for the EC of the new society the members of the Executives of the amalgamating organisations should act in that capacity. An Emergency Committee was also set up to deal with any Emergency Business which might arise, comprising one representative from each of the unions, together with the Secretary, George Hicks (180). No place was made for Williams and Gregory, and this exclusion led, not surprisingly to protests from the two. Williams in particular, proceeded to raise a range of last minute objections to the proposals for transition to the new, merged, society. The timing, as well as the content of these objections suggest that they arose from personal interests, as much as from principled concern with the transition to a unified structure (181). The access of the former GS's of the OSM and the MUOB to decision taking bodies within the amalgamated society was a key issue. Queries relating to the drafting of contributions cards, to financial arrangements during the transition period and to OBS financial obligations were added to the central problem of the role of Williams and Gregory in the forthcoming period, and for a brief moment, the unity, so long discussed, seemed to be jeopardized. Williams might, it seemed, encourage the OSM to renege on the commitments already made. (182) He had been given a free hand by his Executive in the conduct of affairs, and,

in his insistence that the O.M. 'required a little more time working on their own lines before indulging in anything connected with the amalgamation scheme' (183) it seemed that he was intent on using it to postpone, if not to curtail the progress towards full amalgamation. Not surprisingly, it was felt by representatives of the OBS that someone was 'out to stop the amalgamation'. But concessions were made on the matter of the composition of the Emergency Committee, and it was agreed that the GS's of the three unions (Hicks of course was already there) be included (184). Arrangements were then concluded regarding the centralisation of finance and the control of organisers, pending the merger of the three societies. The resolution of the personal issues had prefaced a satisfactory conclusion of other questions.

The AUBTW, like the ASW, was brought into existence from the 1 Jan 1921. As in the case of the woodworkers' merger, it was founded on the principle of a new rule-book and a new structure. But, as with the woodworkers, it was the largest of the unions participating, in this case the OBS, which provided the basis from which the rules were developed. The Society was carved into 11 Divisions, rather than the nine which were originally proposed, Divisions 10 and 11 covering Scotland and Ireland respectively, where only the OBS, of the three unions, had recruited in the past (185). From each of the Divisions a member was elected to the lay Executive Council, which was augmented by two members from each of the societies amalgamating, in order that the interests of each craft section be safeguarded (186). In this way it was hoped to reconcile geographical divisions with the craft interests brought together for the

first time under the umbrella of the one organisation. This arrangement was intended to survive, at least for the first twelve months of the amalgamation, after which it could be maintained if there seemed to be a continuing need for such provisions (187). As in the former OBS, each division comprised a number of Districts with District Committees representing branches in the area covered. The District Committees and Divisional Councils of the OBS were maintained with co-option of members from other societies, pending elections of new committees during 1921 (188). Wherever practicable, branches were to amalgamate, bringing together masons and bricklayers, and economising thereby in the working expenses of branch life (189).

A new system of benefits was drawn up, which became operative from 26 June 1921. The minimum payment - for trade benefit alone, was 9d per week, with the benefit of £1.10.0 per week for strike, lock-out or victimisation payment. On the friendly side, members could make optional payments for sickness, at 6d a week, superannuation, 3d a week and funeral at 2d a week so that a member who paid for all benefits would have a weekly outlay of 1/8 per week with friendly benefits paid out in accordance with contributions made (190). Provision was also made for juvenile membership at a reduced rate of entrance and contribution fees. Members contributing for trade benefit only in the old societies, but wishing to qualify for one or more of the friendly benefits in the new organisation could do so but were obliged to contribute for the full qualifying period of 12 months before receiving benefits. Members already contributing for friendly benefits became entitled to receive benefits immediately the new society began to function, provided they had opted to contribute at the new rate of payment (191).

In an attempt to encourage interest amongst the membership, an Annual Delegate Conference was initiated from 1922, along the lines of the Annual Moveable General Council which had been held in the OBS (192). The conference consisted of five members from each Division, one from each of the five District Committees. The Conference gave consideration to the general policy of the union, but it had no Executive authority, the governing body of the union being the EC (193). Members of the EC, together with the full-time organisers also attended the conference, and it was argued that it provided the occasion for closer contact between the Executive and the members (194). Despite the freedom which this conference gave for the expression of rank and file opinion, compared for example with the ASW which held no comparable gathering, political commitments within the trowel trades union were not such as to allow for the creation of a political fund within the union to further activities in support of the Labour Party (195). The syndicalist ideas of many activists discouraged Labour Party affiliation and although leaders of the AUBTW appeared on the left of the political spectrum, by comparison with other trade union officials, no political fund was set up within the new union. George Hicks, the new General Secretary, had been associated with the movement for industrial unionism, at least until 1914, when the establishment of the BWIU caused him to break with some of his former comrades (196), but by the early 20's he was more actively associated with the political left in the LP. Similarly Dick Coppock, formerly a member of the Social Democratic Federation and an anti-war campaigner, as well as an organiser with the OBS prior to his appointment with the NEBTO, was known as a left-wing militant (197) at this time. Members of the Executive Council were sufficiently committed to

the principle of political activities on behalf of the union to encourage persistent appeals to the membership regarding the creation of a political fund, and yet they were repeatedly defeated on the issue (198). A left wing presence within the leadership and an attempt to stimulate an identity with, and an active support for the Labour Party were ineffective. It seems unlikely that moves for Labour Party affiliation would have met with significant opposition from the left within the membership, since members of the newly formed Communist Party were committed, from its inception, to working within the Labour Party (199). Rather, the substantial majorities against participation recorded when voting was taken on the question suggest that the membership perceived few advantages to be gained from the increased contributions which would be necessitated by the political fund, and that there was little enthusiasm amongst the rank and file for such activity (200). Paradoxically then, the AUBTW, with its 'progressive' image, particularly vis a vis the more conservative ASW, was not affiliated to the Labour Party. It was a position which was to prove a considerable embarrassment in subsequent merger discussions with the Woodworkers.

The foundation of the AUBTW followed a long-standing policy within the OBS in favour of the reduction of the number of trade unions. Yet ironically, the merger was initiated, not so much as a result of this commitment, on the part of some of the leaders and members of that union to the principle of amalgamation, but as a result of discussions between the two smallest unions involved, in what appears as an attempt to consolidate their forces against the OBS. Neither the NUOB, nor the OSM had been able to benefit from the climate in the

trade union world during the first world war, when membership was expanding and trade unions were receiving a new form of recognition through their relationship with Government. Both had suffered in the context of restrictions on the volume and type of building activity which might be undertaken and their negotiations regarding merger can be seen as a defensive manoeuvre for the leaders of both unions were reluctant to accept incorporation into the larger and stronger OBS. The MUOB was too small to retain its autonomy for much longer, whilst the long-term decline in the membership and status of the OSM impelled consideration of structural change. Both bricklaying and masonry had been affected by technological changes in the run-up to the war, as ferro-concreting was introduced on the larger constructions, whilst the steel frame building eliminated some areas of work formerly available to bricklayers. But it was the stonemason who was most acutely affected by such changes and the participation of the OSM in talks on merger were a direct consequence.

The new structure was interesting in that craft boundaries seemed to be breached by the participation of the masons. It is true that bricklaying and stonework were akin to each other as trades, but they had in the past held distinct and autonomous positions within the building trade world. The time-served mason of the nineteenth century would not have considered bricklaying as an alternative form of employment if work in his own field was not available, and would have relied instead on travelling, or 'tramping' to obtain employment, supported in the meantime by his society, the OSM (201). Yet the AUBTW was founded on the principle of one card for all of its members (with the exception of semi-skilled workers in quarries),

assuming thereby the interchangeability of crafts, provided that the rates for each trade were not affected. The nature of the new organisation, appears to be ambiguous, for although the society was defined by the craft traditions of its three major constituents, by its admission of certain semi-skilled workers, it seemed to allow the possibility of future development on the basis of a more 'open', pattern of recruitment. The name itself suggested that the intention might be to expand along industrial, rather than along craft lines, yet the decision to transfer the labourers already recruited by the Stonemasons' Society into a Labourers' organisation suggested a reluctance to trespass outside of the areas of craft organisation. If the nature of the new organisation was ambiguous, the intentions of some at least, of its founders were less so. Discussions regarding merger were pursued by George Hicks with a number of other unions, not all of them amongst kindred trades, in the following years.

In an attempt to broaden the scope of the amalgamated society negotiations were initiated with other cognate trade societies during 1921/22, notably the Tile, Faience and Mosaic Fixers and the Building and Monumental Workers Association of Scotland. On the first of these two societies, it was Hicks, as GS who raised the question of amalgamation with Sharp the GS of the Tile and Mosaic Fixers. A meeting between representatives of the two organisations followed in which a number of questions were raised. Firstly it was argued by Sharp that the smaller organisation risked losing its identity within the AUBTW. He was assured that his union would be allowed to retain its identity, both through the establishment of a special branch of the AUBTW and by identifying its members, by their trade, upon the contribution card. This seemed to satisfy the formal

objection, but it was clear that Sharp, and other representatives of the TF&MF Society would lose their positions as a result of a 'take-over'. The smaller union would not be allowed any direct representation on the EC, although it was stated that its members could stand for any post in the same way as any other members of the union. There were already several displaced officials within the Amalgamated Union, and it is unlikely that Hicks would make any further concession on this point, in view of the limited size of the TF&MFS. The propositions, as they stood were unlikely to appeal to the leaders of that union, but there were disincentives for the members too, in the way that the merger was proposed. There was to be nothing to prevent any member of the amalgamated society from working at any trade for which the society catered in which he was competent, although it was allowed that the special rates paid to the tile, faience and mosaic workers must be upheld. The question of benefits, always a sensitive area in merger discussions added to the obstacles to amalgamation and the discussions did not reach fruition (202).

Negotiations with the B&MNAS at Executive level were no more successful. The AUBTW provided benefits which were better than those paid by the Scottish organisation for the same contribution, so it was proposed that the B&MNAS could be 'taken over' by the AUBTW on the basis of the provisions of the AUBTW rulebook (203). On the important question of craft representation on the governing bodies, it was clear that the rules of the AUBTW would have to be changed, if this principle were to be admitted. It was suggested that the issue could be referred to National Delegate Conference with a recommendation that the size of the EC be increased to 12 comprising one bricklayer and one mason representative from Scotland, with

two masons, one quarryman and seven bricklayers from England and Wales. In the event of conference not accepting the principle of craft representation, then this could be allowed through the co-option of a craft representative from any craft not adequately reflected in the composition of the EC. The future position of the three full-time officials, including Hugh McPherson the General Secretary of the B&MNAS was to be assured, in the capacity of organisers for the no.10 Division and this large and scattered Division was to be regrouped into 10 separate Districts with a new General Office in the Glasgow District. (204) These proposals were not sufficient to tempt the members of the B&MNAS to renounce their autonomy in favour of merger with the Amalgamated Union. The position of the B&MNAS was in no way comparable to that of the OSM prior to merger, since the number of stonemasons in Scotland was less affected by technological innovation than in England, and in any case masons claimed the right to do brickwork. A measure of Scottish resistance to take-over was certainly a part of the response to the merger proposals, but it was grounded in the difference in building practices between England and Scotland and reinforced by the limited representation to be allowed to the B&MNAS at national level within the AUBTW. Although the balance of representation which was proposed was favourable in view of the relative size of the two organisations, it was clear that decisions would be taken by an Executive which was dominated by representatives from the South (205). An earlier merger involving a Scottish bricklayers' society had given the AUBTW a base North of the border, but the EC of the B&MNAS resisted pressures to concede their autonomy to the larger English based society. Other initiatives regarding amalgamation which were taken by representatives of the AUBTW involved

unions which could not, in any sense be regarded as recruiting cognate trades, and discussions around these, broader proposals, will be given further attention in the section relating to proposals for One Big Union.

#### Pt.4. The Labourers and amalgamation

The movement for unification amongst kindred trades was more effective amongst the craft unions, during this period, than amongst unions of builders' labourers. The attempts which were made to rationalise trade union structure, encouraged by the NFBTO, were less successfully applied to the unskilled, despite attempts by leaders of the craft organisations to spread the gospel of fusion.

Four major unions of builders' labourers were in existence at the time when the NFBTO was brought into being; the United Builders' Labourers Union (UBLU) (1918 figs) with 20,484 members; the United order of General Labourers of London with 12,000 members; the National Association of Builders Labourers (NABL) with a membership of 14,955 and the Navvies Builders Labourers and General Labourers with 7,000. In addition there were two general unions recruiting amongst builders labourers; the National Union of General Workers and the Workers Union. It was the intention of leaders of the craft unions to bring together the unions representing builders' labourers into one organisation which would be the recognised home for this category of workers, thereby undermining the potential scope of the general unions.

This craft strategy depended on their ability to control entry to the NFBTO, and via that body to the negotiating machinery

within the industry (206). They would then be in a strong position to restrict the progress of the general unions. Only two of the unions of Builders' Labourers were represented at the first annual meeting of the Federation in 1918, the UBLU, and the National Ass. of Builders' Labourers. Applications for affiliation were received from a number of other unions, including the United Order of Gen. Labourers and the Navvies Union, and although these applications were initially rejected, appeals from the two bodies of Builders Labourers ensured that they were accepted into affiliation, although the Executive strongly urged the fusion of the four labourers' societies (207). A conference of their Executives was called, in May 1919, when the general principle of merger was agreed and a committee set up, of two representatives from each of the unions, together with a sub-committee of the Federation, to draw up a scheme of amalgamation (208). By November amalgamation seemed to have been secured (209), but progress was hampered by the rival claims for the position of General Secretary. The debate grew up around the election of S. Taylor of the Navvies Union as General Secretary, elected against Dan Haggerty of the UBLU, and it led to a split within the new society which theoretically encompassed all of the labourers' unions, the National Builders Labourers and Constructional Workers Society (210). From the ensuing fracas two organisations emerged. The first, known as the NBL&CWS, was a continuation of the old UBLU, with Dan Haggerty as General Secretary. The second, which was registered as the 'Altogether' Builders' Labourers and Constructional Workers' Society comprised the other amalgamating unions, led by S. Taylor (211). Attempts by Coppock, now GS of the Federation, following the death of Wm Bradshaw, together with other leaders of the

NFBTO, to bring about a reconciliation were unsuccessful, and he was forced to accept the continued existence of the two bodies (212).

The establishment of the Civil Engineering Construction Conciliation Board in 1919 undermined the influence which the craft societies could command within the unions of builders' labourers. Craft authority relied on control of the negotiating machinery - a control which had been absolute when arrangements at the national level were confined to the machinery of the National Conciliation Board. It was intended by the leading figures within the Federation that this authority should be continued with the creation of machinery for national collective bargaining but the initiative of some of the labourers' leaders undermined their strategy. (213) Henceforth the labourers were less dependent on craft influence and leaders of the craft societies were less able to secure their own position by resisting an extension of the membership of the general unions in building production.

#### Pt.5. One Big Union: Discussions in the early 20's

If attempts to amalgamate the Labourers' Unions were not an unqualified success, the mergers of cognate craft trade unions in the post-war era, nonetheless represented a significant step forward in the movement for unity. It was not yet clear how far that movement might be taken; organisational boundaries were not finally drawn and prospects for fusion across, as well as within trade areas had still to be confronted. Amalgamation between kindred trades had often been described as a necessary preface to full industrial unity, and the Federation, which was yet in its formative stages, was not seen as a final

answer to organisational problems. How far could the hints at wider unity, which were contained, for example in the structure of the AUBTW, be carried through into a fully fledged industrial unionism? Discussions proceeded around this question, both between individual unions, and under the auspices of the NFBTO, until crises in inter-union relations during the mid 20's severed the existing tenuous unity within the Federation.

Leaders of the AUBTW consistently favoured one union for the building industry as the appropriate form of organisation (214), and consequently encouraged amalgamation across craft boundaries. Not long after the foundation of that union, negotiations were initiated with the NBL&CWS in an attempt to prepare a suitable scheme of amalgamation for the two. Amalgamation along the lines of a fusion, with new rules was not envisaged. Rather, it was proposed that the labourers' union be absorbed into the larger body, although there was no intention of insisting on an adjustment in the rates of contribution and benefit in the labourers' society, since it was recognised that the lower wages of the labourer would prohibit the successful conclusion of an amalgamation on such a basis (215). It was intended that a section for labourers be maintained, with separate branches, which could be grouped into geographical districts and Divisions, along the lines already operating within the AUBTW. The Labourers' Section was to be allowed special representation on the Executive Council, the Divisional Councils and the District Committees of the AUBTW, able to nominate and elect their own representatives. The scheme, outlined by a sub-committee of representatives of both unions received only a luke-warm reception from the EC of the Labourers Union, and a less than enthusiastic response from

the members of the AUBTW. The EC of the NBI&CWS were wary of relinquishing control over their organisation or their assets, after their recent difficulties with the other unions of builders' labourers. Consequently they demanded the right of control over the funds, assets and organisation of the Labourers' section for a period of at least twelve months after the merger. Members of the AUBTW, by contrast, were not enthusiastic for a scheme which suggested a lowering of their own status, by association with an organisation of unskilled workers. When the proposed amalgamation was mentioned in the union's journal, resolutions were sent in on the subject from a number of branches, and of 38 resolutions received, 31 were against the proposals. Craft prejudices survived within the AUBTW, despite the enthusiasm of its leaders for the movement towards amalgamation. And in this case craft prejudice won the day, for Hicks had to concede that, in view of the 'mixed reception' which had been accorded to the proposals, a further period of propaganda was essential, and that in the meantime 'the matter stands adjourned' (216).

The onus of preparing a satisfactory scheme of industrial unity was then shifted to the NFBTO. In November 1922, following the acceptance of a resolution endorsing the principle of industrial unionism for building trade workers, a committee, representing each union, was set up to explore the possibility of re-organising along industrial lines. Craft unionism, it was agreed, was deep-rooted, and any scheme for industrial organisation was obliged to take account of the various craft interests (217). That obligation led, very rapidly to a renunciation of proposals for full amalgamation and a concentration on a scheme for the co-ordination (or 'semi-amalgamation!')

of the trades and labourers' unions in the building industry (218). The projected 'confederation' amounted, in effect, to an amalgamation for trade purposes, as an attempt to circumvent the difficulties associated with the adjustment and standardisation of the benefits of the various organisations. (219) It was hoped that, in this way, the transition could be made from Federation to full amalgamation at some future time. A minority report, signed only by S. Sigsworth of the Plumbers, and W. Coles of the Plasterers, suggested that full amalgamation was impossible, for the same reason, but recommended that unions amend their rules along standardised lines, such that, at some future date, the movement towards amalgamation might be facilitated. (220) The Amalgamation Cttee reported to a meeting of the Joint Executives, held at York in January 1923, and in view of the prevailing division of opinion, and the lack of any clear method of progressing on the issue, the Joint Executives passed a resolution asking the amalgamation committee, in conjunction with the Federation, to continue its efforts in relation to amalgamation of cognate trades - a rather different proposition from that which had originally been put forward (221).

Discussions of full amalgamation under the umbrella of the Federation were abandoned, and the initiative was again returned to the individual unions.

Correspondence had already been exchanged between the AUBTW and the ASW on the matter of amalgamation, but the question had not been pursued whilst meetings were being held via the Federation. The Executive Councils of the two societies were brought together in conference on the 19th June 1923 when

the issues were broached in a general way. George Hicks was anxious to bring together the two largest organisations in the building industry as a means of furthering the cause of the One Big Union, but difficulties were envisaged by Tom Barron of the ASW regarding the structure and activities of the two (222). Firstly, he argued, there was a greater degree of Divisional autonomy within the AUBTW than within the ASW, where policy was more directly under the control of the Executive. Secondly there was the matter of political activities and affiliation to the Labour Party, a principle upheld within the ASW, but not supported by the members of the AUBTW. Thirdly there was the problem of the Annual Delegate Conference, held by the AUBTW, but not favoured by officials of the ASW, who preferred their own structure which gave authority in policy matters to the Society's General Council (223). Other issues, such as the differences in benefits, or the different patterns of recruiting outside of the building industry proper - for example in shipbuilding or the iron and steel industry, were not seen as insurmountable difficulties. Generally the attitudes seemed to favour unity and some fine speeches were made on both sides regarding the need to hasten amalgamation, to bring together the two largest unions in the industry, and thereby impel the smaller unions to accept merger, and the necessity of overcoming the 'evil of the official element' hindering the progress of amalgamation, a problem which, it was stressed, was particularly acute within the smaller unions. 'Every little union has its official'. Yet despite this promising beginning, no further progress was made. The difficulties encountered when the question of industrial unity was discussed within the Federation could not, magically be over-

come when the framework for discussions was adjusted to eliminate the smaller unions. If the matter of differing contributions and benefits had been significant in January, it was no less significant in June, and neither party to the discussion brought forward proposals which tackled these obstacles.

Opposition to amalgamation was almost certainly present amongst some, at least of the officials involved in discussions (224), but perhaps more seriously, the economic and political climate impelled officials to give attention to more pressing matters, in particular to the crises in relations with the employers in 1923 and 1924; the question of fusion along industrial lines was pursued no further.

#### Pt.6. Building trade union mergers 1914 -24

Despite the wide-ranging discussions on industrial unity, the amalgamations which were effected within the building trade unions during this period relied fundamentally on the principle of alliances between unions organising kindred trades. Unity between carpenter and cabinet maker, or between bricklayer and mason, did not transgress the lines of demarcation between crafts, although it suggested that those lines were shifting in response to changes in the process on which each craftsman was engaged.

The progress was made in accordance with the moves to national identification of problems and national negotiation which had emerged during the First World War. Whilst the focus for organisation and collective bargaining had been widened during the years before 1914, the experience of war-time inflation and the problems of negotiating with government representatives encouraged the move from local and regional to national collective bargaining, and it was in response to such pressures that the

NFBTO had emerged. The rules of the NFBTO required that its affiliates should organise on lines which paralleled its own, and the national trade union, organising one class of workers throughout England and Wales, and preferably throughout Scotland as well, was a pre-requisite for the effective workings of the Federation. Affiliation was restricted to national organisations so as to undermine splinter groups, or local organisations which hoped to retain their separate identity (225), and the logical extension of this policy necessitated the establishment of one union for each class of affiliated workers. This is not to suggest that discussions on structure were always pursued within the orbit of the NFBTO, but rather that the evolution of the Federation was itself a part of a movement towards national organisation which also incorporated the changing structure of the individual trade union. The OBS and the MUOB, like the ASC&J and the GUC&J, organised the same class of craftsmen, across the country on a national basis. Rivalries of this type were less susceptible to exploitation by the employers when negotiation proceeded along regional lines, allowing each society to operate in the areas within which it was best represented. In the context of national policies and national negotiation, such divisions could less readily be reconciled, and the rationalisation of structure appeared as a matter for immediate concern.

The relationship with unions organising in Scotland remained a problem, for although attempts were made to draw the Scottish societies into the orbit of the wider movement, questions of Scottish autonomy remained important. It is true that the ASW had successfully incorporated the Associated Carpenters and Joiners of Scotland, as a result of the merger in 1911/12, but the AUBTW had failed to draw in the societies of Scottish

masons, which had united in 1920 to form the Building and Monumental Workers' Association of Scotland (226). Similarly the National Society of Painters, which had consolidated the two main Painters' Societies in 1904, made no progress in unity with the Scottish society, whilst organisations of plasterers and slaters in Scotland maintained their trade unions distinct from their English and Welsh counterparts until the 1960's. The only major success in this period was achieved through the reunification of the English and Scottish plumbers in a merger which became effective on January 1st 1921 (227). Differences in building practice, which varied regionally, became more marked when comparisons were made between one country and another, affected by differences in materials and style of building. Trade union practice and political outlook north of the border were also rather different from customs in England and Wales, and it is not surprising that in the tougher climate of Scotland union members were reluctant to sink their identity in with their brothers in the South. Claims for a separate negotiating structure for Scotland had still to be met, but pending that decision, members of the building trade unions in Scotland declined to abandon their own distinctive organisations. The matter was complicated by the fact that the OBS, like the ASC&J, was already organising in Scotland, but whatever the impact of their recruitment, they were unable to overcome the desire amongst Scottish trade unionists in the building crafts, for autonomy in organisation and bargaining.

Despite this important limitation, the scope of the ASW and the AUBTW was wider, as a result of the rationalisation, than it had been hitherto. It is true that the ASC&J had been amongst

the foremost of the national amalgamated societies of the 19th century, yet for all of its apparent strength, it had never managed to eliminate its much smaller rival, the GUC&J, nor the related organisations of cabinet makers and furniture trades operatives. The unity now achieved, although not complete in respect of some of the related trades, was a break with past rivalries. One organisation now predominated in each of the trades - woodworkers, bricklayers and painters, and could speak for each of those trades within the National Federation.

Unity may have been the principle governing these mergers, but it was a principle which was confined to organisations recruiting predominantly amongst craft workers, and operating within the confines of each craft. It is true that the processes of industrial change which characterised the pre-war era, as well as the period 1914-18, served to undermine the traditional notions of craft, and to encourage a more generalised approximation in definitions of skilled work - the aircraft woodworker, the woodworker in ship building, the carpenter employed on house construction were all woodworkers, and the specialist terminology which distinguished between their various types and levels of skill, applicable in the nineteenth century, were no longer so appropriate in the years after the first world war. The operative stonemason, the craft aristocrat of the nineteenth century, was forced to accept amalgamation with the bricklayer, whose position in the building trade hierarchy was formerly rather less elevated. And all of them were threatened, as craft workers, by the process of technological innovation and speed up. The impact of innovations in technology or raw materials was much less marked amongst the building crafts than they were in engineering where techniques of

scientific management narrowed the range of skills which the craftsman was called upon to exercise (228). Many of the tasks which the craftsmen in building work might perform were undertaken on site, and required the ability to organise and to execute each particular piece of work, with only a limited degree of supervision from a craft or generalforeman. Yet the experience of war-time, when a range of activities had been shifted to the workshop, had redefined the possibilities for managerial innovation, in which the off-site pre-fabrication of components was to play an important part. Manufacturers who had participated in the production of woodworking for aircraft or engineering during the war, now interested themselves in the possibility of workshop production of joinery and other components for on-site assembly of standardised forms of housing - the 'homes fit for heroes' which were so much discussed in the period (229). Experiments had long since been undertaken regarding the possibility of speed-up in bricklaying (230) and it seemed likely than an intensified demand for building work might result, not so much in an increased demand for building labour, as in a widening application of new technology - use of the woodworking machinist being one example - and in new forms of organisation which would affect the demand for, and status of the building craftsman. It is in this context that the structural changes affecting the building crafts must be viewed. The principle of inter-changeability of crafts amongst cognate trades embodied in the new societies was a recognition of the extent to which traditional forms of employment might be eroded by these trends. Conservatism amongst the members ensured that changes in structure did not overstep the requirements of innovation in building practice, and so the general delineation of craft was broadened to encompass the new industrial trends.

The balance in size and relative influence of societies within each trade facilitated administrative arrangements for merger, once the general principle was agreed. The predominance of one large society within each trade area had, at times seemed to threaten the smaller organisations with a 'take-over' in which the particular interests of their members, or arrangements which were valued parts of their organisation, would be ignored (231). In order to bring about the unity which had been discussed for so long, leaders of the largest unions - the ASC&J and the OBS were obliged to recognise this problem and to accommodate the individual officials and the organisational practices of their smaller associates. In both societies rule changes were contemplated in the post-war years. In both cases it was possible to present these rule changes as the basis for a new pattern of trade union government, distinct from that of all of the constituents of the unified society. In the case of the ASC&J, the membership was asked to vote, both on the question of amalgamation, and on the new rules, within one ballot - forcing members who favoured amalgamation to vote in favour of the rule changes, or alternatively, by rejecting the rule changes to reject amalgamation too (232). In practice the rules and structure of the new organisations, the ASW and the AUBTW showed a high degree of continuity with the operations of the largest of their constituents. The pattern of government of the OBS, which had already been modified by the rule changes of 1918 laid the basis of operations for the AUBTW, with its District and Divisional structure, and the Executive Council elected from the Divisions (233). The ASW was founded on the basis of the structure of the ASC&J, with its Executive & General Councils, and its Management Committees. So that the largest society, in each case,

provided the nucleus - not just in terms of membership or finance, but also in relation to administrative arrangements, for the operations of the new union.

In each case amalgamation tended to centralise the power to take policy decisions. Within the ASC&J the impetus to amalgamation derived specifically from the threat which was posed by the employers' attack on the plain-time system of payment for woodworkers - an attack which was associated with war-time changes in woodworking processes. Leaders of the ASC&J identified the problem in terms of resistance at the national level. Unwilling to leave the initiative to members in particular workplaces, to shop stewards or to their Management Committees, their response to the attack was to strengthen the influence of the ASC&J over other unions in related trades, and to strengthen the authority of the EC of the ASC&J over the members. Moves towards unity between the various union organisations were associated with a centralisation in control of policy and organisation which defined the structure of the ASW.

As the key official within each union, it was the general secretary who initiated and controlled negotiations in respect of trade union merger, as in many other matters. One of only a few full-time officials the GS was concerned to consolidate the organisation and in doing so to reinforce his own position at the centre of affairs. During the war years he was hampered in some measure by the new responsibilities accruing to the union's national headquarters and his response was to foster the formation of a body of officials who could assist with the conduct of business at the national level and give support to

the policies which he was pursuing. In the case of the ASC&J it was the Executive Council which was strengthened in consequence of the emphasis on central control. The General Council, which met only occasionally, could not command the influence necessary to such a task. With the creation of the ASW, rules were adjusted to allow the EC equal authority with the GC, as nationally elected representatives from all over the country, with provision for a sub-committee to take responsibility for the regular control of affairs. This was followed by a decision in June 1924 that the existing part-time EC of 7 members be replaced by a full-time EC of five members - proposals which were put into effect during the course of the following year (234). Amalgamation involved not merely the elimination of rivalry between one union and another. A key part of the amalgamation process was the pursuit of a policy, at central level, to raise the authority of the unions Executive. In order to defend their policy on payment systems, the Executive removed the major questions concerning wages and hours from the jurisdiction of the IC's, shifting power from the districts to the central Executive level within the merged Society. They could do so without opposition precisely because those most likely to oppose them - the activists within each district, were also the 'enthusiastic amalgamators' who had campaigned so long for unity through amalgamation.

Within the AUBTW, the progress of centralisation was less marked than within the Woodworkers union. It is true that the rationalisation within the OBS in 1918 had broadened the representative basis on which the Executive was elected. Whereas in the past, Executive members had been chosen from a limited geographical area, according to the location of the seat of government, the

new Executive Council was representative of the whole union, one member being elected in each Division (235). In the ASW, by contrast, although nominations were made on a regional basis, elections took place across the membership as a whole, so that Executive members did not regard themselves as answerable to any particular region. The AUBTW then, had an Executive which was less centralised, and more directly responsive to regional variations. Since it was not a full-time Executive, its power was naturally more limited than that of the ASW, and it had less capacity to create policy at a national level. It might be argued that the independence of the EC within the ASW was checked by the presence of the GC, but it has already been suggested that the GC's legislative capacity was limited by the infrequency of their meetings. And within the AUBTW, the Annual Delegate Conference, although not yet a policy making body, posed similar limits to the autonomy of decision making by the Executive Council. Moreover there was established, within the AUBTW, an important body of full-time organisers, elected at Divisional level, whose influence, within their own locality, might be at least as significant as that of the lay members of the EC. So the AUBTW, despite the emergence of a central executive deriving from the union as a whole, did not manifest, to the same extent as the ASW, the tendency towards centralisation of policy making.

If amalgamation was defined by craft tradition during this period, how serious was the prospect of unity along industrial lines, which was proposed and discussed after 1921? 'Our industry is one which lends itself peculiarly to one union', it was argued 'There is no other industry more compact than the building industry' (236). It is strange that this point of view should

have been expressed by Tom Barron, of the ASI, for his union was one which recruited widely, not just in building sites and in joinery shops, but amongst woodworkers in shipbuilding and engineering, in the aircraft industry and on the railways, in short wherever woodworkers were employed, either in manufacture on woodworking processes, or in maintenance work in other, unrelated industries. Contrary to the statement which he made in negotiation with the AUBTW, the notion of a single 'building industry' in which one union could operate along industrial lines was not unproblematic. The AUBTW, by the scope of its organisation, reflected the difficulties which might be encountered. Its members might be employed in the iron and steel industry, in foundries, in the mines, or in railway workshops, as well as in building houses, factories, or public buildings. Similarities might exist in the type of work undertaken - that is, a bricklayer would be laying bricks wherever he was employed, but there was a lack of homogeneity in the areas of employment in which he would be carrying out that work. The painter too might find work in diverse industrial situations, and faced the additional problem that, with the greater risk of unemployment in his trade, he might be defined as a 'building worker' only for part of the year, working in other areas altogether, or facing unemployment for the months when no painting work was available. Lines of demarcation between one 'industry' and another often seem to be arbitrary, and contrary to the views expressed by Barron, this is particularly the case in any discussion of the building industry. Organisation had, until this time, proceeded along craft lines, and there was no necessary correlation, although one was often assumed in negotiations on structure, between craft and industry.

Both forms of definition were incorporated in the structural changes of the period 1914-24. The mergers leading to the formation of the AUBTW and the ASW continued, although in a modified fashion, the craft definitions of the previous century, whilst the establishment of the Federation provided a framework for the representation of interests along industrial lines. The establishment and consolidation of the Federation itself required the perpetuation of craft organisation and it was the disintegration of craftism which was eventually to undermine the Federal structure. The NFBTO, like other Federations, was set up on the basis that unions could affiliate all, or a part of their membership, and it was possible, in this way to reconcile the apparently conflicting interests of craft and industry. The prior existence of the Federation, brought into being from 1917, may have undermined any serious movement towards industrial unity, since it provided a limited, but adequate framework for the expression of industrial interests. William Bradshaw, the first GS of the Federation was concerned to show that federation and industrial unity were not mutually incompatible, but rather that the federal structure could, itself pave the way for a wider form of amalgamation.

'Federation is not the last word in organisation. Some day we shall realise the futility of having so many unions. Such multiplicity means waste and weakness, and it should be the duty of our Federation to promote, and the triumph of its purpose to accomplish the healing of differences which ought never to exist. There are those who think that Federation may postpone the coming of amalgamation. From such an opinion I would most respectfully differ. There is nothing in the National Federation to retard or impede the work of amalgamation proceeding.'

(237)

Insofar as Bradshaw was referring to amalgamation between kindred trades he was correct, for the AUBTW was brought into being partly as a result of the assistance of the leaders of the NFBTO - including both Bradshaw and, after his death, Richard Coppock (238). But the statement was less accurate in relation to the matter of industrial unity, where the Federation structure would itself be threatened if negotiations were successful.

Discussions of unity were themselves stimulated by dissatisfaction with the early machinery of the Federation, and the level of friction which subsisted between the affiliated unions (239). But ultimately it was recognised that amalgamation had, in the past, proceeded between similar, or identical trades, and that the industrial unity which was proposed represented a significant and perhaps not altogether happy move into a new industrial arena. A new principle was involved (240), and it was one which would not be wholly welcomed, either by the members, or by the leaders of the craft trade unions.

Even amongst cognate trades, amalgamation proceeded only with difficulty. As Coppock pointed out, in 1924, (in the article cited in footnote 237) 'although amalgamation may sound very obvious and simple, the difficulties are very real' ... 'amalgamation must in the long run rest on an actuarial basis, and it is here that unpleasant realities occur'.

He was of course quite right, for the actuarial assessments even between cognate trades had been a major cause of difficulty in the pre-war discussions, and a sensitive area for negotiation in the mergers of 1920/21. If contribution payments and benefits could feature so largely in talks between unions of

kindred trades, which shared some traditions, as organisations of the craft aristocracy, it was certain to be a high priority for craft negotiators in discussions which drew together, not only one craft with another, but unions of craftsmen with unions of builders' labourers. Since the latter made little provision for payment of friendly benefits, unity had necessarily to be effected on a trade only basis, if it was to be effected at all. But for a craft organisation based on 'amalgamated' principles, such as the ASW, the unity of funds for trade and friendly purposes was one of the fundamental tenets, and not lightly to be abandoned in favour of an abstract principle of amalgamation with whatever impecunious organisation of builders' labourers. The overseas membership of the ASW may have seemed to present practical problems inhibiting amalgamation (241), but it was far less significant than the prevailing actuarial differences between unions involved in these discussions.

Nonetheless it might be argued that reference to differences in contributions and benefits by union leaders was a rationalisation of more entrenched opposition to mergers. True the principles of craft trade unionism would not lightly be abandoned, but they would be adjusted where it proved advantageous to the leadership of an amalgamated union to consolidate, by opening recruitment outside of the traditional craft sphere - as in the case of the AMU where a trade only section was established for labourers. For the building trades, no apparent advantage was to be gleaned by permitting unskilled and semi-skilled workers to join unions whose membership had previously been confined to the ranks of the craftsman. The intention was to reinforce the distinction between skilled and unskilled and admission of the labourers to a craft society, or merger between a craft and

labourers' union would have the opposite effect. Financial differences were a fundamental problem, but with a positive commitment by union leaders to the issue of amalgamation, its actuarial basis did not prove to be an insurmountable problem.

Financial questions did not derive solely from the interests of the members in the status quo. Officials of all of the unions had an interest in ensuring the preservation of their current situation and prospects and would not lightly enter into arrangements which, in the long-term, would be to the detriment of their own employment. Could the one big union accommodate all of the officials of all of the unions currently affiliated to the Federation? And if so, what would happen to the claims of the pro-amalgamationists that the one big union would be an economical measure? Militants suggested that amalgamation could never come about through the permanent officials, and allegations were made that the federation represented a 'fusion of officialdom' which doomed efforts at amalgamation to failure (242). George Hicks echoed the idea, expressing resolute opposition to Federation at its inception in 1917:

'Federation ... has always been found wanting. The association it permits of is always too loose ... It unites officials, but not the rank and file; it is clumsy in its activities; it is weak in its expression; it is autocratic in administration; it is obsolete as a fighting force' (243). Just three years later Hicks was President of this "obsolete fighting force", and the tenacity with which the Federation was maintained by full-time officials in subsequent years, suggest that his earlier analysis may have been correct. The problem was most acute in relation to the officials and General Secretaries of the smaller unions.

In the words of Tom Barron 'every little union has its official', and they may have feared that one big union could not provide a niche for all of them (244). Dick Coppock, once he had consolidated himself as GS of the Federation, had a vested interest in its expansion, rather than its contraction, and he could expect to be backed by the Federation's Regional Secretaries, who had a similar axe to grind. To qualify this, it must be stated that vested interests were not introduced into the building trade unions by the formation of the NFBTO. Rather, it was the strength of the Federation that it was able to accommodate the many and varied interests which existed within its individual affiliates. In accommodating them, it ensured their perpetuation, and the perpetuation of the individual unions which made up the NFBTO. It provided moreover, a new structure with its own entrenched interests, which was to prove equally difficult to dislodge. Amalgamation along industrial lines was unlikely to sweep along at a rapid pace when separatism could be reinforced so satisfactorily.

Finally consideration must be given to the ideological factors affecting amalgamation, in particular to the significance of the pre-war syndicalist movement in encouraging trade union members to favour the movement for fusion. It has already been suggested that there was a spin-off from the campaigns for industrial unionism to the extent that arguments in favour of merger were put, and were put frequently, within union publications, in trade union branches and, presumably, on the shop floor. That members of the various building unions favoured the simple, uncomplicated mergers within cognate trades can be established indisputably from the returns made in elections on the issue, for even within the OBS in 1920 a large majority voted in favour

of amalgamation, although the total vote was insufficient to satisfy legal requirements, and in all other major votes overwhelming support was recorded for projected cognate mergers (245). But how far can the support indicated for these relatively straight forward mergers be taken as an indication of a wider commitment to the principle of amalgamation, or indeed to proposals for One Big Union? It is always difficult to ascertain the views prevailing amongst the membership on such issues. So often questions of structural change appeared as the prerogative of union leaders, discussed in conferences attended by a select few, reported briefly, if at all in union journals, reflecting perhaps a limited interest amongst the rank and file and generating still less. A resolution at the annual meeting of the Federation might stimulate a new round of predictably abortive activity in this direction, but in itself it need not imply strong feeling at the grass roots on the need for unity. On this issue, more than on many others, the membership seems to have been wheeled out for voting purposes, and it is consequently hazardous to draw far reaching conclusions from voting returns. They can be taken when positive only as an indication of tacit approval, and not as an indicator of active commitment. It is true that resolutions from branches, and letters on the subject were, periodically, numerous, but the deduction which can be made from this fact need go no further than to suggest that the 'enthusiastic amalgamators' were able to swing support on this issue amongst an otherwise apathetic membership. That there were such enthusiasts for the amalgamation movement is indisputably true - but that their numbers were large, or their following very active is more questionable. Many members might be unaffected by the problems of multi-unionism, particularly if their allegiance was to one of the larger unions, operating

in an area where its trade influence was almost unrivalled and they might not then perceive the problem as one of pressing significance for their own organisation. A lack of clarity persisted between campaigns for merger amongst kindred trades on the one hand, and full amalgamation into one industrial union on the other. Supporters of the movement for One Big Union would almost certainly lend their efforts to the campaign for amalgamation amongst kindred trades, as being a move in the right direction. Supporters of the kindred trade amalgamation were by no means so certain to support the endeavours to bring about an industrial union for the building industry. The need to stimulate membership interest even for the more limited form of amalgamation, was reflected in concern that the ballots should not be rushed and that the rank and file should be given adequate information and plenty of time in which to record their votes (246) whilst proposals amongst the leadership of the AUBTW for amalgamation with a labourers' union could not achieve support, even for the principle of amalgamation, let alone for a detailed scheme for merger (247). So it seems that, although there was membership support for the principle of amalgamation, it was amalgamation along cognate trade lines which was favoured. There is little evidence of enthusiasm for the wider industrial fusion, and the large votes in favour of the mergers which were concluded cannot be adduced as a general indication of support for industrial unity. Quite simply, the ideological battle for one big union never really got underway. The issues were not clearly presented, and although a campaign for industrial unionism was waged it failed to find the widespread response which was needed if progress was to be made in the face of leadership resistance.

The movement towards cognate trade amalgamation, encouraged by the leadership of the ASW, reflected, not so much a rival ideology as a policy decision, taken in the face of encroachments on craft control and payment on a plain time basis. It was presented very often as the precursor of wider forms of amalgamation along industrial lines, and no attempt was made, by its proponents to distinguish between the more limited, and the more extensive models of amalgamation. Whilst the leadership of the AUBTW were concerned to promote industrial unity, officials of the ASW at no time seemed anxious to move beyond the parameters of merger between cognate trades. The extent to which structure changed in accordance with the wishes of the ASC&J and subsequently the ASW leaders is striking. It was as a result of their initiatives that the NFBTO had been established, drawing together unions recruiting in or around the building industry. The commitment within the ASW to the principle of Federation was based primarily on the possibility of ensuring support for their own policies, where necessary, amongst other building trade unions. The joint negotiations established via the Federation ensured a common purpose in collective bargaining, reducing discrepancies in policy which might have undermined their position. Given that the ASW was the largest, and most powerful of the building trade unions, it is not surprising that it was seen as a natural ally by leaders of many of the other craft unions - even when they were separated by political differences. In this context, the enthusiasm of some of the leaders of the AUBTW for amalgamation with the Woodworkers is understandable - especially where the larger organisation seemed to promise enhanced job prospects for officials and a greater political influence within the trade union movement. Tactically, amalgamation with the Woodworkers would have guaranteed the

success of the wider industrial amalgamation, for, as ASW negotiators were aware, a merger between the two largest trade unions in the field would have ensured that the smaller ones were rapidly assimilated (248). But the Woodworkers needed to go no further than the liaison established via the looser framework of the Federation. This ensured them, both an autonomy on issues of policy, which were decided within their own union, and the supremacy of that policy when it was carried to other building unions within the federation. George Hicks pursued the matter of amalgamation across craft barriers persistently throughout this period, but his endeavours were doomed to failure so long as he confronted the resistance of the ASW negotiators to any wider fusion.

The two unions which were established in the period of post-war amalgamations reflected limited but significant changes in industrial practice, especially during the first world war. They were founded on the basis of alliances between unions recruiting cognate trades. The structure and recruitment of the AUBTW hinted at a wider form of industrial unity, but both unions were inaugurated as the result of mergers between kindred trades, and were defined by the craft traditions of their predecessors. Attempts to encourage the unification of the labourers' organisations backfired, and subsequent merger discussions between the AUBTW and the NBI&CWS found little support in either of these bodies. Indeed all of the discussions around the question of industrial unity were destined to fail, for leaders of the ASW were unwilling to abandon fully their independent organisation and benefit structure, or their autonomy on policy issues. The Federation provided the means of stabilising relations with the other building trade union leaders, without renouncing this independence and as such,

it provided the industrial counterpart to the craft trade unions within the building industry. The movement for a broader based amalgamation was inhibited, by the vested interests of both members and officials, expressed within the prevailing Federation structure which ensured their perpetuation. Nonetheless the mergers which were effected were carried through on the basis of some degree of popular support, deriving in part from the campaigns in favour of 'amalgamation', conducted for the most part by industrial unionists over the previous years. The interaction between the changing base of trade union organisation in the building industry, and the ideology which favoured structural change, was by no means clear-cut. Supporters of full industrial unity were involved and implicated in the campaigns for merger between unions of kindred trades. There seems to have been a vague and widespread support for 'amalgamation', deriving from the campaigns for industrial unity, without any necessary implication of support for industrial unity itself. The shape which was taken by unions of woodworkers, bricklayers and their associates over this period, was to last for almost fifty years.

CHAPTER 4.

THE CONSOLIDATION OF THE NFBTO: 1920-1939

Introduction

Commentators on the inter-war years in Britain have stressed the problems of adaptation, within the British economy, from the decline of the staple export trades - notably textiles and the heavy industries such as coal, steel and shipbuilding to the creation of the 'new' industries, especially motor vehicle production and electrical engineering. (1) The shift in the nature of economic activity was accompanied by set-backs for sections of the working population which were, traditionally amongst the best organised - particularly the miners and the engineers. The domestic recession was later compounded by an international financial crisis whose effects, measured in human terms, were disastrous. A National Unemployed Workers Movement was founded in 1921 to organise and fight for the rights of unemployed workers, and following the industrial defeats sustained by the working class during the early twenties, symbolised during the General Strike in 1926 with the capitulation of the General Council of the TUC, the question of unemployment became a critical one for the trade union movement. The number of workers unemployed remained at over one million during the 1920's, rising to 2 million in July 1930, following the Wall Street crash, and peaking at  $2\frac{3}{4}$  million during 1932. (2) After this low point in the slump, the growth of the new industries led to an expansion in the economy, reaching a high point in 1937, although unemployment was still over 1 million. (3) The 'problem of the distressed areas' - those regions most seriously affected by the decline in the staple industries of Britain's industrial revolution was countered by the emergence of a new prosperity in parts of the Midlands and the South of England. Regional diversity was a key feature of these years.

Politically, lines were redrawn by the emergence of the Labour Party as a party of government. A new constitution for the LP was accepted in 1918, permitting membership at an individual level and campaigns were waged by activists in many areas to consolidate local units of the Party, which could back affiliated unions in providing an electoral machine. With the decline of the Liberal Party, Labour now represented the political alternative to the Tories, a focus for working class aspirations, despite the formation of the Communist Party in 1920.

Labour achieved office twice during this period - in 1924 and 1929, although in neither case did the Labour Government command an over-all majority of seats. (4)

Trade union organisation was affected, both by the defeats and disillusionment of the twenties and by the unemployment of the thirties. Union membership had risen after the war, with the return of troops and the buoyancy of the post-war economy which seemed to promise full employment. Encouraged by expectations of social change, fostered during the war years, and by the novel sensation of power which had accompanied the development of union strength on the shop floor, membership had risen to 8,348,000 in 1920, approximately double the number of union members in 1914. It then fell steadily until 1933, its fall broken only by small increases in two years - 1924 and 1929 - the years when Labour was elected to office. From 1934 it rose as employment opportunities widened with the consolidation of the new industries, but even by 1939 it reached only 6,298,000, well below the record level set in 1920. Not until the end of the second world war was this record to be surpassed (5).

How were the building trades affected by the economic and political changes of the inter-war years? What impact did the election of 2 Labour Governments have on building production? How did the relocation of industry and population affect the type and quantity of building output during these years? And to what extent were the bargaining structures formulated after the first world war, retained in the ensuing period? The stabilisation of collective bargaining at the national level is a central feature of developments. Attention will be directed to the procedural changes which led to the formation & consolidation of the National Joint Council for the Building Industry and to subsequent adaptations to the national negotiating machinery. The final objective of this chapter is to evaluate the adjustments made to trade union structure. How far were the building trade unions affected by the unemployment and defeats of the inter-war years? And what impact did this have on their internal government and organisation? What role was assigned to the NFBTO in its early years? The question of structural change was closely related to the stabilisation of the Federation. The consolidation of the NFBTO was of singular importance to its affiliated unions and an account will be given of its history between 1920 and 1939.

#### Building production between the wars

The Addison Act was abandoned in 1920/21 as the result of a catastrophic slump. The abolition of building controls in 1918, combined with the impact of post-war inflation to raise building costs to the local authorities. Pressures at the political as well as the economic level encouraged the termination of government projects to expand the stock of working class housing, although it was recognised that something must

be done to compensate for the lack of interest by private enterprise in this area (8). Preparation was made for another Housing Act, which was introduced in 1923, but before it could be made operative, an election was called which resulted in the return of a Labour Government. The election of December 1923 resulted in Labour gaining 191 seats supported by the Liberals who had 159, to the Tories 259. Clearly the Labour Government's authority was limited in this context as the Liberal Party would certainly oppose any sweeping measures of reform.

Despite Labour's lack of an over-all majority it has been claimed that: "The Government's record of reform was not altogether barren. Its most notable achievement was John Wheatley's Housing Act, which paved the way for a substantial increase over the following years in municipal house-building" (9). John Wheatley, an ILP'er was appointed to the Minister of Health and together with Tom Shaw as the Minister of Labour, pushed through the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1924, more commonly known as the Wheatley Act. The new legislation provided an increased subsidy of £9 per house per year in urban parishes and £12.10 in rural parishes for a 40 year period and returned to local authorities the power to provide working class housing without having first to show that this could not be done by private enterprise, as required by the Chamberlain Act in the previous year. The legislation envisaged a growth in local authority building, but it did not tamper with the property relations which governed the structure of the industry and the scope for output. Land was not nationalised. Finance for building activities was still to be raised within the capital market. It was essentially through its commitment to a large scale output that the Labour government could be distinguished from its Tory predecessors.

The move from low levels of activity to projects for high output inevitably promised to strain supplies both of materials and of labour. It was apparent at the outset that the provision of skilled labour would be essential to the success of the project. The recession in shipbuilding and other industries employing large numbers of joiners and plumbers had temporarily eased the supply of workmen in these trades, but a shortage of bricklayers and plasterers was expected. The government pursued its objective of securing the co-operation of building employers and operatives through the uncharacteristic initiation of tripartite meetings where these issues could be discussed. A Sub-Committee on Labour Supply was set up comprising four employers and four trade union representatives to consider the problem. They concentrated on the possibilities of expanding the supply of skilled labour and concessions were made by trade union representatives to allow an increased number of apprentices to be trained, and to permit dilution through the establishment of adult training schemes which would increase the number of new entrants to the industry (10). No serious attention was paid to the possibility of making more efficient usage of the existing supply of skilled labour through a scheme for decasualisation, despite the pressure from the leaders of the AUBTW, in particular George Hicks, during the national dispute in that year.

The Government scheme was intended to provide for a long-term programme of housebuilding, financed from the public sector and it was on this basis that the co-operation of the trade union movement had been secured. Some 2½ million houses were scheduled for construction over a fifteen year period - an average of 170,000 p.a. (11) But Labour was in office for

less than one year and there was no guarantee that subsequent governments would maintain the project in its original form. In September 1927 the Minister of Health reduced the subsidy on housing as of September 30 1927. The effect was that housing already under construction was rushed through in order to qualify for the full subsidy - to such an extent that 52,000 houses were completed in that month alone. From October 1927 there was a dramatic drop in monthly completions - in March 1928 for example only 7,170 houses were completed. (12)

The election of a second Labour government in 1929 was heralded as likely to bring a renewed spurt of activity to building production. Arthur Greenwood was appointed as Minister of Health, and it was announced that the subsidy on houses built under the 1924 Act would be restored. There was no new initiative in the field of housebuilding comparable to that which had been taken by the 1924 government. The Housing (No.2) Act had less impact than Wheatley's legislation, for it was concerned almost entirely with slum clearance. Moreover the initiative under this legislation remained with the local authorities, many of whom were not anxious to become involved in the provision of public housing. (13) Beatrice Webb commented early in the Government's life that the absence of any provision for housing, other than for slum clearance or relief of distress suggested that Labour's policies were not being fulfilled (14). In the context of the acute financial problems which followed the Wall Street crash, and in the absence of any policy within the Labour movement to explain or legislate for improvements in the situation, political decisions were centred on the possibilities of cutting rather than increasing public expenditure. Financial expediency was placed above

political commitment and housing, in this situation was accorded a low priority (15).

The turning point came in 1933 after the collapse of the Labour Government when the sharp fall in interest rates led to an intense boom in private housebuilding which continued at a high level, for most of the decade. If the public sector was the focus of attention between 1924-31, it was the speculative builder who took first place for the rest of the thirties, employing a majority of building workers and turning out the larger proportion of the houses (16). Many building firms turned to the construction of owner-occupier properties, especially around the outskirts of London. The firm of John Laings for example, which had not been involved in private housing development since the beginning of the century incorporated a new company to operate in this field - Laings Properties Ltd. John Laing viewed such activities as part of a commitment to the national well-being:

"Once a man owns his house, he has a stake in his country. Else he is rootless ... The man who is tenant of a house and garden can be very happy but never altogether satisfied." (17) The provision of state housing was not the only answer to the social turbulence of the post-war years. Owner-occupation was designed to foster identification with a property owning democracy and to this end and with substantial profits to be made Laing constructed about 1 in 50 of the houses put up by private enterprise in the London area. Estates were built at Colindale, at Sudbury, at Golders Green, Woodford and in North East London. Like John Laing, Frank Taylor became involved in housebuilding activity around London during the 30's. Unlike Laing Taylor's background was in housebuilding and until 1930 he was based in the North East of England. The move to London was followed by housebuilding

activities in the suburban areas and in 1935 Taylor Woodrow became a limited company incorporating Taylor Woodrow Ltd., F. Taylor Jnr. & Co. Ltd., Wonder Homes Ltd., and the Sudbury Estate Co. Ltd. (18)

In the Greater London area, private enterprise housing output increased from just over 34,000 in 1929 to almost 45,000 in 1931, climbing sharply to reach a total of nearly 73,000 houses in 1934. Private output in London fell slightly in the following years to around 68,000, and as the rearmament programme was put into effect it dropped still further. By the end of March 1938 private firms had completed over 600,000 homes in the Greater London area since the end of the war - a total which was possible only because of the impact of the depression, which lowered interest rates to levels which encouraged investment in housebuilding (19). For a time it seemed that the private sector had seized the initiative which had been taken from them by successive governments during the twenties.

There was a wide range in the size of firms operating, from the one man business to the large scale contractor. In terms of numbers the large and medium sized firms were swamped by the small jobbing builders, and the number of small firms actually rose during the inter-war period - especially during the 1930's. The numbers of workers engaged in firms with less than 10 employees increased:

<u>Firms employing not more than ten workers (on average) (21)</u>			
	1924	1930	1935
No. of returns rec'd	27,625	40,078	64,028
Av. no. of persons employed	419,053	453,566	502,278
Av. no. employed in firms employing not more than ten workers	94,247	152,340	236,071

The expansion of building output created new opportunities, both in the field of new building, and in the areas of repair and maintenance vacated by the larger firms. Capital requirements were low and initiatives may have been encouraged by the level of unemployment, since a craftsman, owning his own tools, might be likely to work on his own behalf, especially on small-scale repair work, if no other employment was available. (20)

Only four firms employed more than 2,500 operatives in 1935, and only 31 firms employed more than 1,000 operatives & although it should be recognised that the casual nature of building work makes these estimates liable to inaccuracy (for the number of employees could vary significantly in a very short period) it is clear that the size of building concerns, when assessed on this basis, remained limited. However it is apparent that the number of large firms had increased since 1930, when only 16 firms employed more than 1,000 workers. Whereas in 1930 only 32,978 operatives were employed in firms of 1,000 or more, by 1935 the figure had risen to 55,550. (22)

It was the larger firms which were most likely to be responsible for the bigger projects connected with building other than housing. The firm of Higgs and Hill, founded in 1874 and established as a limited liability company in 1898 was involved with a number of large jobs in central London during the 1920's, concerned with the construction of large stores - Peter Robinsons in 1923, Liberty's in Regent Street in 1924, and Swan and Edgar's at Piccadilly Circus in 1928, when one of the first tower cranes was used in Britain. During the thirties the firm moved to the industrial developments in outer London - the Hoover factory on Western Avenue, the Gillette, Coty and

de Havilland factory buildings, and in Coventry, Alvis Motors (23). In Civil Engineering there was a concentration of the larger companies, since the capital requirement was much higher than for the smaller scale housing programmes. John Laing's for example apart from their involvement in housebuilding during the thirties, built the new pumping station at the Littleton Reservoir, for the Metropolitan Water Board and was engaged in work for the Air Ministry, and on other major public contracts. (24). The defence works which were underway from 1936-37 provided further contracts for the big companies who could move from house-building to civil engineering according to the level of profits to be made in each area. A factory building epidemic was reported in parts of South Wales during 1938, with the development of ordnance factories at Bridgend, Glascold (Monmouthshire) and Pembrey (Caermarthenshire) (25). In the Southern Region during the same period, it was reported that towns nearest to Government contracts were busy, although seaside and holiday resorts on the South coast were slack (26).

Despite the activity generated by building and civil engineering work of all types unemployment amongst building trade operatives remained at a fairly high level throughout the inter-war years. The percentage of the building workforce which was unemployed was higher as always than the average figure for the economy as a whole. Unemployment amongst building workers rose steadily during the late twenties and reached its peak during the winter of 1932/3. The unemployment figures given in Appendix B relate to the building trades, rather than to those workers who were under the building and civil engineering agreements, so clearly they reflect the impact of cut-backs in areas outside of the building industry itself. Unemployment

was lower among craftsmen than among unskilled workers, with the notable exception of the painters (27). The official unemployment statistics for the building industry may have been boosted by an influx of workers from other industries who had found, or hoped to find temporary employment in building production (28). The impact of unemployment was harshest in the traditional centres of heavy industry, in the North of England, South Wales and Northern Ireland. The Midlands and the South-East of England, where the 'new' industries were expanding were less seriously affected (29).

Unemployment was almost certainly exacerbated by the process of rationalisation within building production. The introduction of labour saving machinery reduced the demand, both for craftsmen and labourers (30). Mechanical navvies, mortar mixers, tubular and ratchet scaffolding, pneumatic hammers and drills, new saw frames and carborandum wheels for stone cutting, electrical hoists and cranes - all of these innovations had an impact on the work of bricklayers, masons, or their labourers (31). Carpenters and joiners were affected by the mechanisation of the manufacture of door and window frames, which had proceeded to such an extent that it had an appreciable impact on the volume of work available. The introduction of other mechanical processes and modern methods of concrete construction meant speedier production and shorter periods of employment when work was found. (32) Paint-spraying machinery took its toll of the work available for painters, whilst the complex process attached to the mixing and matching of colours was simplified by changes in the chemical constituents of the paint (33). No single innovation can be pin-pointed which affected all of the trades uniformly, but a tendency to standardise

processes wherever possible, to encourage specialisation in a particular task, rather than working over a range of tasks, to use new and synthetic materials and to intensify and speed up the process of production seemed to gather momentum (34).

Whilst modern methods were introduced, most often in the larger towns, and on the larger building sites where innovation was an economic proposition, their impact was sufficiently widespread to be a cause for concern, insofar as they intensified the high level of unemployment, and undermined the basis for craft organisation in the industry.

Under the triple impact of economic crisis, cutbacks in government expenditure and innovations in the machinery and raw materials in use in the industry, membership of all of the building trade unions declined, to reach a low point around 1932-3 when unemployment was at its peak.

Trade union membership in building in the inter-war years

Union	1921	1925	1930	1933	1935
ASW	124,831	107,056	108,861	93,871	102,839
AUBTW	76,000	59,620	55,220	50,067	54,335
Painters	61,984	39,423	35,304	28,063	33,27
Plasterers (English)	11,530	11,319	12,396	11,240	12,98
Plumbers	24,844	20,676	23,244	21,298	23,105
Slaters & Tilers (Engl.)	2,066	1,340	998	910	991

(35)

The building trade unions, weakened financially by the struggles of the early 20's, and in particular by the building workers lock-out of 1924, suffered a reduced income through declining

membership and increased demands for unemployment benefit, in this period. The ASW, the largest, and financially amongst the most stable of the craft unions in the industry showed an increase in the amount paid out for unemployment benefit from £31,036 in 1925 to £131,524 in 1930 rising to £200,454 just two years later. (36) As the payment of unemployment benefit rose so the value of the union's assets declined. At the time of the amalgamation these had totalled £298,287, and although the amount had fluctuated during the early 20's, a peak had been reached in 1930, of some £363,737. In just two years this was eroded to £149,601 (37). Payment of unemployment benefit from the funds of the AUBTW rose from £13,958.5.11d in 1930 to £56,730.8.5d in 1932 (38). Whilst the Plasterers, who experienced the fastest rate of increase of unemployment of any of the crafts, saw unemployment benefit payments rise from a mere £197.14.9d in 1925 to £13,834.10.9d in 1932 (39).

The Painters who had consistently the highest level of unemployment amongst the craftsmen, saw an increase in unemployment benefit payments from £53,102.6.4½ in 1925 to £69,067.10.4 in 1932. Assets, which were low in Dec 1925, following the impact of the lock-out (standing at £49,871.10.5½) fell from £68,919.13.0½ in 1930 to £43,616.16.2½ in 1932 (40).

It was the Painters too who were slowest to recover from the impact of the depression. Whereas by 1935 the Woodworkers had restored their membership to 82% of the 1921 level, and the Bricklayers had reached 71.5%, in the case of the Painters, membership still stood at only 54% of the level claimed in 1921.

The nature of the building activities was inevitably affected by the geographical relocation of industry generally during the inter-war years. The industrial buildings and the infrastructure required by the expanding sectors made demands on the capacity of the building industry providing employment in the South and East of England in particular. The interest of government in housebuilding provided employment opportunities in this area during the twenties - opportunities which were shifted to the private sector in the thirties, as low interest rates facilitated speculative building. But unemployment in building remained slightly higher than the average for the economy as a whole, and the building trade unions were subject to a crisis in membership and in their financial stability, especially between 1929-32. It was not a propitious period for the consolidation of the collective bargaining machinery established in the wake of the first world war. What difficulties were experienced in the operation of the new machinery after 1920? And how far were adjustments necessary during the depression if the National Wages and Conditions Council was to fulfil the role assigned to it at its inception.

#### Collective bargaining in building, 1920-39

The National Wages and Conditions Council was founded in 1920 on the crest of an economic boom. Fundamental to its operation was negotiation at national level concerning the pay and conditions of building operatives. The central principle embodied in the national working rule agreement was the notion of the craft rate, that is uniformity of pay for all craftsmen. This involved levelling up the wages of the lower paid crafts, in particular the painters, to the standards of the carpenters and the bricklayers. District variations in payments were

accommodated by a national grading structure which linked wage rates throughout the country. And wages were to fluctuate in accordance with a 'sliding scale' which was based on moves in the cost-of-living index. These key features of the agreement were established at a time when the balance of industrial power favoured the operatives. In the political climate of the post-war months, with an increase in the number and extent of strikes in building, as other areas, concessions from the employers were in order (41). Economic conditions were sufficiently bright, until the latter months of 1920, for employers to permit improvements in wages and the introduction of the 44 hour week at small cost to themselves. But towards the end of 1920 a fall in prices began, accompanied by a contraction of the volume of trade. Unemployment mounted rapidly from 5.8% (of total insured workforce) in 1920 to 11.3% in March 1921 and 17.8% by June of the same year (42). An account of the following years highlights the return of the initiative, in industrial matters to the employers, as the disintegration of the Triple Alliance and the demoralisation of Black Friday, the defeat of the Engineers in 1922 and the General Strike four years later undermined the organisation and vitality of the trade union movement.

In the building industry struggles were centred around the defence of the principles embodied in the national working rule agreement. The employers applied the strength which they gained as a result of the shift in economic climate to attack the unions over a number of central issues. What was the building industry, and to what extent should the rate agreed for building be applied in other areas? Could building trades operatives employed in other industrial sectors be regarded

as within the building industry? Should the craft rate be applied to all crafts regardless of the level of skill associated with their work? Should not the rate paid to painters be below that paid to other crafts? The attack on the agreement was extended to the principle embodied in the adjustment of wage rates on an index-linked basis. The agreement had established a specific relationship between wages and prices. How far, if at all, could this be varied to take account of wage adjustments in other industries, or of the general level of industrial activity? And on the question of working hours, or any other conditions of work, how far could regional variation be allowed to terms which were agreed at national level. If local autonomy was permitted in negotiations of this kind, was there not a risk that the national unity, effected for the first time through the National Wages and Conditions Council, would be undermined? These questions were fundamental to the operation of collective bargaining in building during the twenties.

Their resolution was an essential prerequisite for the more effective formulation of bargaining machinery at national level during the following decade.

The traditional organisation of building trades operatives along craft lines could not readily be reconciled with the industrial demarcations established during the post-war years. Building craft workers in engineering and shipbuilding, on the railways or in the iron and steel industry were beyond the scope of the building industry as such. The organisation of these craftsmen, in unions which recruited according to trade, conflicted with their industrial identity. In engineering and shipbuilding this untidy situation had, at least partially

been resolved by the formation of the FEST, to which several of the building unions were affiliated. It was the FEST which was responsible for pursuing negotiations in engineering and shipbuilding and it was generally accepted that the rates for building craftsman would be different from those which applied in building production itself. Although two major disputes involving building craftsmen took place during 1921-22, they were concerned with the level of payment, rather than with the principle on which payment was to operate. Whatever the contradictions resulting from the fact that craft organisation spanned industrial boundaries, this was not the direct cause of conflicts within engineering and shipbuilding during this period (43).

On the railways the situation was more contentious. There had been endemic conflict between the NUR and the building craft societies since the formation of the former organisation before the war. The claims of the NUR to recruit and to negotiate along industrial lines conflicted with the established presence in railway workshops of the building trade unions. They had participated during the war in a Committee representing craft workers in railway workshops. In the post-war years it became evident that there was a lack of uniformity in the rates and conditions which were applied. In some areas building craftsmen were paid on the basis of various engineering awards. In others the building trade rate was applied. As the war bonus was reduced, and the engineering awards terminated, it became clear that payment according to the building trade rate was preferable from the point of view of the operative. When attempts were made to initiate negotiations to resolve the problem, the Negotiating Committee of General Railway Managers

refused to discuss the matter unless representatives of the NUR were present. The outcome was a reference to the Industrial Court in February 1922 (44) with terms of reference 'to determine the rate of pay and conditions of employment applicable to the various classes of men employed in the several departments of the railway shops or in connection therewith.' In its award (No.728) the Industrial Court defined the railway service as one complete industry. Rates of pay and conditions for railway shopmen were standardised at base rate, to take effect from Oct 1 1922. The decision was a blow to the craft unions on the railways. The Federation of Engineering and Shipbuilding Trades issued a circular criticising the terms of the award and within the NFBTO there was considerable disquiet since the decision effectively undermined any claims to parity with the building trade rate. The craft societies did not have the strength to control the railway workshops without the assistance of the NUR, and it was the NUR viewpoint which predominated within the Industrial Court. The pay and conditions of building trades craftsmen could henceforth be settled without reference to the building trade rate, although it was agreed that representation be allowed to the building unions on a grading committee which was set up as a result of the award (45). By declaring industrial entities such as the 'railway industry', the 'engineering industry' and the 'mining industry', Arbitration and Industrial Courts undermined the claims of the building trades to incorporate their members who were employed in these areas into the 'building industry' with its own terms and conditions. There were at least 150,000 building workers who were members of the NFBTO via their own unions, whose situation was not governed by the NW&CC. The scope of the bargaining machinery for building, and with it the authority of the NFBTO, was

constrained by the new definition of industrial boundaries.

The problems on the railways were paralleled by a major dispute in the iron and steel industry which employed large numbers of bricklayers and bricklayers' labourers relining brick furnaces. In June 1919 an agreement was reached between the OBS, the Nat. Association of Builders' Labourers and the Iron and Steel Makers Association setting rates and conditions for the Teeside and Tyneside area. The rates were set at a level which included war bonuses, but it was agreed that they should be reduced when any portion of the war bonus was wiped out by a national award, a trade award, or by mutual arrangement between the parties concerned (46). Subsequent adjustments were made in accordance with fluctuations in the sliding scale for the steel industry, but once again it was clear that payment in accordance with the building trade rate held more advantages than payments on the basis of the iron and steel trade rates. Following a ballot vote on the question, the trade unions gave notice to the Iron and Steel Masters in October 1921, of their intention to terminate the existing arrangements. Meetings were pursued until February 1922, when negotiations broke down. (47) Bricklayers and masons engaged in the steel industry were receiving less pay when the strike broke out than were labourers engaged in the building industry. This situation could continue - could even deteriorate, if the relevance of the building trade rate were not clearly established. (48)

It was the operatives in the North East of England who were in the forefront of the struggle for the building trade rate, but they were by no means isolated in their support for the principle, although not every area took strike action. In Scotland building operatives employed in the steel works were already

paid in accordance with building trade rates, although the steel masters were anxious to reverse this position. (49)

In South Wales, where employers refused to observe the building trade rates, the bricklayers responded with an overtime ban (50). But in Manchester strike action was taken, although the steel masters there were not affiliated to the employers' national body and seemed more willing to discuss settlement in line with terms negotiated for the building industry. Union strategy was to establish wage negotiations at a national level, but even after six months of industrial action, the employers refused to meet representatives of the unions. The turning point came in July of 1922 when the claim for the building trade rate within the South Wales Steel Industry was taken to the Board of Arbitrators under the Industrial Courts Act. In line with the principles embodied in award no. 728 the Industrial Court ruled against the union and in favour of distinctive terms for the iron and steel industry. This decision confirmed that the building trade rate should not extend to other areas in which building trades operatives were employed. From this point the resolve of the AUBTW leaders weakened. The strike had been pursued for over six months, with little outcome, other than the establishment of a breakaway union for bricklayers in the steel industry (51). Conflicting assertions were made concerning the commitment of the strikers to pursuing their objective, but the situation, after six months of strike action in the North East, was extremely serious. Unavailing appeals were made to the Minister of Labour, for intervention, but by October the situation was declared to be hopeless. The union had incurred heavy financial losses and membership was falling. At the end of October a sub-committee was appointed to visit the steel works district and after consultation with the Divisional Secretaries, they recommended that the dispute ~~be~~

be officially closed. (52)

This defeat confirmed the limited application of the building trade rate. The authority of the NW&CC was, in future, confined to operatives engaged on building, public or private, housing or other construction works. It also included repair and maintenance where this was undertaken by building employers or by public authority. But where craftsmen were employed on repair and maintenance tasks in other industries, it was clear that their terms and conditions of work should be set by the appropriate negotiating body for those industries, rather than by the NW&CC. The bricklayer who moved from the steel industry to housebuilding was, for the purposes of collective bargaining, moving from one industry to another. Unions recruiting within the building trades found that the scope of their organisations conflicted with new industrial boundaries. Employers in the steel industry, as on the railways, challenged an interpretation of bargaining arrangements which involved them in agreements reached by the building operatives with the NFBTE.

The next challenge to the building industry agreement came from the ranks of the building employers themselves. The notion of the 'craft rate' united the building trades unions within the Federation and gave them a common purpose in negotiations. This principle, was attacked as employers endeavoured to break the precarious unity established within the ranks of the NFBTO.

The trade which was singled out for special attention, with a concerted attack on the craftsman's rate, was painting. Painters had not, in the past been credited with the full

dignity of the craftsman's status (53). Their position was at the bottom of the craft hierarchy, both in terms of the level of their pay, and the regularity of their earnings. Painting was distinguished from other trades, by the severity of seasonal fluctuations in employment, a situation which was exacerbated by the extent of luxury work in that trade, which meant that painters could be more readily dispensed with than other workers (54). In recent years the number of painters had declined dramatically; there were over-all some 40,000 painters ~~less~~<sup>fewer</sup> in 1924 than there were in 1914 (55). Innovations such as the use of electricity, instead of dirt-producing gas and the use of water paint instead of size distemper, combined with the continuing trend towards more superficial work to reduce the demand for labour. Unemployment amongst painters was much more widespread than amongst other building trades (56) and it is not therefore surprising that it was the painters who were singled out for the employers' attack.

Their campaign was opened by the suggestion that painters' wages should be reduced to a level  $12\frac{1}{2}\%$  below other crafts. (57) The proposal was pursued within the NW&CC, with the suggestion that many men employed in painting should be paid at a rate mid-way between the labourers and the journeyman painter. 'Brush-hands' argued the employers, were common within the trade, and were not as skilful as fully trained craftsmen (58), therefore a special rate should be established. This suggestion, if accepted would have established a new grade of operative, and a new level of payment within the WRA - that of the semi-skilled. The Painters, naturally enough, were happy to latch on to the coat-tails of the more elevated crafts, in particular the woodworkers, being defined,

with them, as skilled worker, and paid at the same rate. But for the other trades too there were obvious disadvantages in the employers' proposals. The introduction of a semi-skilled grade would make the undercutting of the craftsmen's rate very easy for the employers. The suggestion was the thin end of the wedge as it would establish a precedent capable of extension to other trades. (59) Clearly this was a test of the principles on which the Federation was based (60) and it was a test which was to be made outside of the confines of the NW&CC.

In January 1923 the employers in the Eastern counties informed the operatives' secretary that they intended henceforth to pay painters 1d an hour less than other craftsmen (61). The attack was launched in a region where organisation was far from strong, but the Federation sanctioned a complete withdrawal of all trades in support of the painters. The ensuing strike lasted for three months and was hailed as a victory for the operatives insofar as the return to work was made at rates applying prior to the dispute (62). Yet the strikers were not successful in ousting the notion of a semi-skilled worker within the final agreement. The settlement allowed that the fully skilled craftsman should continue to receive the standard rate for craftsmen within the district and that joint action should be taken to secure an adequate supply of apprentices and to ensure that they were properly trained. But it also provided that 'lesser skilled painters' could be employed at a rate between that of the craftsman and the labourer. Operatives were to be registered in accordance with their skill, and the register was to be prepared by local joint committees of employers and trade unionists (63). The locus of the struggle

was then shifted to the individual districts, where the merits and status of painters was argued out. In the stronger areas, where joint painters' committees had been formed, for example in Felixstowe and Newmarket, it was possible to ensure that all of the painters were classified as skilled. Whilst in the weaker districts, such as Leiston, Saxmundham and Aldeburgh, considerable local initiative was put into tabulating details which would strengthen the case for skilled classification (64). However the scheme was never embodied in the national agreement, and it seemed that, for the time at least, the differential rate for craftsmen as a feature of the NWRA had been effectively resisted.

The struggle was to be re-opened just four years later, this time in the South and South-Western regions, where the employers called for the establishment of a differential rate for painters (65). There were a few towns in these areas where painters had never received the same rate as other craftsmen, and despite, or perhaps because of, the observance of procedural niceties by the union officials, the employers prevaricated when attempts were made to deal with the issue. The fight centred around the larger towns - Plymouth, Exeter and Gloucester (66), and reflected a regional weakness in organisation. After 10 weeks of strike action in Plymouth during 1928 the matter was referred to the National Grading Commission where the employers blocked a decision. Local differentials remained although formally precluded by the national working rule agreement.

Whatever the local variations - and some areas did maintain a differential rate for painters throughout the period, the WRA

established a uniform rate for craftsmen which was maintained and defended in the face of the employers' divisive tactics. This position was central to the operation of the NFBTO (67), since it was only by the existence of the uniform rate that the different unions could be held together. The fact that the uniform rate could be held, for all crafts, during the 1920's, facilitated the maintenance of the Federal structure and strengthened alliances between and across craft unions.

The national building trade rate and the employer's counter-attack

In the building industry wages were steadily reduced, by 2d an hour in May 1921, with a further 1d an hour from August and an additional ha'penny from September. Building activity had slumped and as wages were steadily falling in other industries, the employers demanded a further reduction of 6d an hour in March 1922. By 1 June in that year, six reductions in wages had been made, amounting in all to 8d an hour, and only two of them derived from variations in the cost of living arrangements (68).

At the meeting of the NW&CC on 11 Jan 1923 the employers demanded an increase in working hours - to 47 hours per week for 8 months of the year, 44 hours for two months and 41 hours for two months, requiring in addition a reduction of 20% in wages (69). They admitted that they had no case, under the index figures of the sliding scale, for further reductions of wages, but it was argued that, as the building industry depended on the prosperity of other industries for its success, the conditions operating in those industries must be taken into account, when legislating for the building industry (70). There was no case, said the employers, for the maintenance of higher rates of pay

in the building industry than elsewhere. The difference between the pay, and working hours of the joiner in the housebuilding and shipbuilding sectors could not be justified.

Here then was a new set of criteria by which wages might be set. The WRA provided for wages to be index-linked to movements in prices but the employers were now basing their demands on the general level of industrial activity, and on the relationship between building trade wages and wages in other sectors. The operatives had accepted previous departures from the terms of the agreement in order to improve the state of trade, but regarded any further moves in that direction as unreasonable, in view of the greater stability of prices which now applied. (71)

Organisers of the NFBTO led a campaign against the reductions, the crisis serving to bring the trades together. A conference of organisers of the NFBTO affiliates was held on Jan 26th 1923 when it was agreed organisers be allocated to areas, and that area district councils be set up in response to the crisis (72). Mass meetings were held throughout the country, and when the employers terms were put to the members in a ballot they were decisively rejected (73). At a meeting with Sir David Shackleton, arbitration was proposed on the question of wages (74). A national lock-out was threatened, but a last minute intervention by Ramsay MacDonald, leader of the Opposition, led to an agreement that arbitration should be accepted on the question of wages, and that the question of hours be discussed regionally, after which, failing settlement, the matter would be referred to the NW&CC for consideration (75). Sir Hugh Fraser, the arbitrator was then appointed, and the award was given on May 15th on the wages question, the dispute regarding hours being

referred somewhat later to the same arbitral body (76).

The Fraser award re-established the premier position of London, which was given a rate of payment of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d over and above that applying to other grade A towns, in accordance with the situation which had applied before 1915. It allowed a reduction in wages of 1d an hour, but perhaps most important amongst the decisions was the clarification given to the WRA. In future the sliding scale of wages was to determine the fluctuations in wages and it was established that there should be no departure from this method of wage adjustment (77). The clause was abolished whereby employers could urge exceptional circumstances, or use the lower rates of pay in other trades as a reason for lowering pay in the building industry. The criteria for wage adjustments was henceforth to be circumscribed in accordance with the arbitrators decisions and the operation of the WRA for the building industry was consequently clarified.

On the question of working hours, it was now apparent that the 44 hour week no longer applied. Men were regularly required to work for longer than the stipulated working week in many areas and the employers were obdurate in their resistance to serious discussion on the hours question (78). The matter was referred back to the Regional Councils who were unable to come to a decision, so the question was forwarded to the NW&CC who, not surprisingly also reached a deadlock. Indeed the operatives argued that the conditions laid down procedurally were not being observed, since there had been no serious attempt to get a settlement on this question (79). However Fraser did not agree and, in accordance with the procedure of the NW&CC, the issue was referred to arbitration. In August 1923 the

award was given. Summer-time working hours were to be lengthened to 46½ with a 44 hour week for the remainder of the year (80).

At one level the awards, under arbitration represented a defeat for the building trade operatives. They had lost yet again through the reduction of wages, and whilst the increase in hours had perhaps only served to confirm de facto extensions, it was nonetheless a formal and final departure from the 44 hour week, the notable victory of the Federation's early days. In most other industries shorter hours were maintained. Yet at another level, the building trade unions had not completely lost out by the Fraser award. They shared in the general round of defeats which hit the labour movement, but they had maintained the principle of the national agreement, a principle which, it was argued with some justification, was essential if the lowest paid and least organised areas of the country were to be affected in any way by building trade unionism. And in maintaining the national agreement, they had also limited the criteria which the employers might utilise in order to claim adjustments in the rate of pay. The national agreement, concluded in the more prosperous post-war years, had survived - and along with it continued the rationale for the existence of the NFBTO.

The Fraser award prefaced rather than precluded overt conflict within the building industry. In 1923 the employers consolidated their organisation by taking into membership the Institute of Plumbers, the Nat. Fed. of Master Painters and Decorators, the Nat. Association of Master Plasterers, the Nat. Federation of Slate Merchants, Slaters and Tilers and the Scottish Employers. Together these bodies made up the new National Allied

Building Trades Employers (I'ABTE). (81) Building operatives had accepted wage cuts for a period of almost three years, but by the end of 1923 trade was beginning to improve and the return of a Labour Government in December of that year seemed to augur well for the unions. A claim for an increase of 2d an hour was submitted to the NW&CC early in 1924 (82). The arguments produced to support the claim were reminiscent of those brought forward by the employers in defence of wage cuts, referring to gains made in other industries, and to the state of trade generally. The reductions of 1922 and 1923 were too recent to have been forgotten and since the employers had effectively used factors other than the movement of prices in support of their moves for wage reductions the same tactic was adopted by the operatives' negotiators in the more promising political climate of 1924 (83).

But the employers' came nowhere near to meeting union demands. Their offer of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d an hour was made with the proviso that, if the average cost of living figure had risen by the meeting in July, then the  $\frac{1}{2}$ d could be absorbed in any larger increase which might apply under the sliding scale (84). It was agreed by the unions' joint Executives that this offer was unacceptable and further meetings with the employers were convened to pursue the claim. In April the matter was put to the members. Three questions were asked. Firstly, were members in favour of accepting the employers offer of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d? Secondly were they in favour of further negotiations with a view to obtaining an improved offer? And finally, if no improved offer was made, were they in favour of strike action? The results left no doubts concerning membership feeling on the matter. (85) There was no question of accepting the offer, and whilst continued negotiations were acceptable, there was a large majority in favour

of strike action if the offer were not improved. Subsequent talks produced little that was new. The basic increase was still  $\frac{1}{2}$ d an hour, with some variation in dates of implementation, there was to be provision for regrading towns which were grade 'A' from Jan 1925, and an enquiry might be held into the incidence of time lost through inclement weather. But new conditions were to be attached. These recommendations were made conditional on what were described as deliberate breaches, by NFBTO affiliates, of the terms agreed by the NW&CC, especially on Summer working hours, overtime, and the refusal of the Scottish operatives to put the constitutional awards into effect. (86)

The employers stressed the importance of national control, by the NFBTO over its own members. Particular emphasis was placed on the Federation's ability to bring the Liverpool District into line, for the Liverpool operatives had never accepted the principle of national negotiations and still operated in accordance with their own local working rule agreement. When in 1919 the Liverpool Building and Allied Trades Employers affiliated to the North Western Federation of the NFBTE, the operatives in Liverpool refused to accept the terms agreed for the North Western area and struck in defence of the local working rule agreement and for higher rates of pay. The dispute concluded with an award which gave Liverpool operatives wages substantially higher than those in Grade A towns (2/- per hour, compared with  $\frac{1}{8}$ d) (86). The employers in Liverpool then withdrew from the North Western Employers Federation, claiming that they had received insufficient support. In 1923 the Liverpool and District Employers reaffiliated to the North Western Employers Federation, and through them to the NABTE,

on the understanding that the existing working rule agreement would continue in operation until April 1924. It was intended that the Liverpool workers would then come into the national grading scheme on the grade 'A' rate (87). The problems in doing so reflected the fundamental difficulties associated with national negotiations. In essence the implementation of a national wage structure was advantageous for the poorly organised rural areas. In order to incorporate the Liverpool operatives, the highest paid and the best organised of all of the provincial towns, it was necessary to shackle their organisation, and to make pay cuts of approximately 4/- to 6/- a week (the differential had by this stage been reduced to around 2d an hour).

Predictably the conflict led to strike action by the Liverpool workers. In June the strike was begun, against the advice of most of the Executives of unions affiliated to the NFBTO. The EC of the ASW led the way in condemning the strike, for the assertion of local autonomy by the strikers conflicted with the principle of national settlements, endorsed and supported by the leaders of the ASW (88). 'It was a situation that had to be remedied since it cast doubts on the validity of national negotiations and hence could have opened the door for further successful revolts in other areas.' (89) The commitment to national negotiations was central to ASW policy and there was no question of the EC allowing this to be neglected in order to support the Liverpool strikers. Trade privileges were not granted and the Liverpool MC were informed that they should accept the employers' offer (90). Support of the Painters' EC for the line adopted by the leaders of the ASW was axiomatic. Local autonomy could easily be associated with the adoption of varying rates of payment for the different crafts - a principle

which the painters EC - conscious of their position at the bottom of the craft hierarchy, were anxious to avoid. The Liverpool operatives had not adopted the principle of one craft rate, and the painters were the lowest paid of the crafts in Liverpool (91). Support for the Woodworkers EC was based on the Painters' commitment to one craft rate. The Painters' EC actively pursued this line with their Liverpool members. But to the latter it was clear that it was preferable to be at the bottom of the craft ladder in Liverpool than to be equal with other trades in a national structure which was lower than the one which currently applied in their locality. At a meeting addressed by their Executive in April, the Liverpool painters agreed to accept national policy on this issue, but popular feeling soon reverted to support for local negotiations, and at another mass meeting in May the previous expression of opinion was over-turned. The EC of the Painters recognised only the local expression of opinion which accorded with their own. Like all of the other craft societies at executive level (with the sole exception of the Plasterers) they gave consistent support for the national policies adopted by the Federation. National negotiation required the subordination of local interests and initiative to the operation of the national agreement. Adherence to this policy necessitated opposition to the position adopted by the Liverpool men.

The resistance in Liverpool to the provisions of the national agreement was in many ways exceptional. 'Militant Merseyside' was dominated by activities around the ports. The resilience and solidarity of its working class was displayed in the great strike of transport workers during 1911. And it has been claimed that the casual based nature of much of the port work encouraged the self-reliance of many Liverpool workers who

often regarded their own union officials and national executives as being on the side of the employers (92). These factors certainly fostered independent attitudes evident amongst the Liverpool building operatives. The prosperity of the building trades during the previous years had established a high demand for labour, and it was against this background that trade unionists in Liverpool had won wage rates which were so much better than the standards set by the national agreement. London posed comparable problems, although the case for special treatment was more widely recognised because of the concentration of building activities in the capital city. In Scotland too there were claims for autonomy in negotiations. But employers and unions were reluctant to concede a breach in the national agreement. If Liverpool once set a precedent, this could be emulated by any other district, and national negotiations would be correspondingly undermined.

Confusions arose concerning the terms on which the employers revised offer was made. The NABTE claimed that the increase of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d an hour was conditional on the unions asserting control over their members. Union leaders did not apparently take account of the conditions and put the terms to their members without any reference to their conditional nature.

The Joint EC's recommended acceptance and when the question was put to the ballot, their position was endorsed (93). A meeting with the employers was held on June 16th 1924 when a settlement was agreed and signed by both sides (94).

It stated that:

"Should there unfortunately be any section of the Liverpool operatives which fails to fall into line with the rest the

Executives of the bodies already referred to pledge themselves to co-operate energetically until a complete settlement of the Liverpool dispute is effected."

It was not yet clear that the very basis of the settlement would be jeopardized if the Liverpool question was not resolved. On 17 June it was announced that a settlement had been reached. As a consequence the situation in Liverpool deteriorated, for the agreement certainly implied wage cuts in Liverpool. The operatives there rejected the terms of the settlement (95). The employers, acting in support of their Liverpool affiliates, withdrew all offers, broke off negotiations and declared a lock-out as of July 5th. It has been suggested that this arbitrary behaviour by the employers derived from their determination to embarrass the Labour Government, which was then putting Wheatley's Housing Bill through Parliament (96). But this does not provide an adequate explanation of the employers' intransigence, in view of the fact that they, like the operatives stood to gain by increased orders for building work. Their concern related far more to the scope and credibility of the negotiating machinery for the industry, than to political issues at this juncture.

The national strike which followed lasted for a total of 7 weeks. The tactic on the union side was for local agreements to be reached wherever employers were prepared to abide by the rates agreed at national level. The question of guaranteed time, raised in earlier discussions with the NABTE was also pursued. The conduct of the strike itself was based upon controlling the supply of labour to employers who were prepared to accept terms (97). And, ironically, support was to be given to the

Liverpool operatives in their dispute (98). By the beginning of August it was claimed that thousands of agreements had been signed throughout the country and that by the beginning of August over  $\frac{1}{4}$  million building trades operatives were working under the new terms (99).

The dispute was concluded towards the end of August. Terms of settlement reached on August 22 1924 provided for a wage increase of  $\frac{1}{2}$ d an hour, but there should be no further alteration before Feb 1 1926. Hours of work were to be in accordance with the Fraser award, except in those localities which had agreed to vary the hours by mutual consent. A committee was appointed to consider the problem of time lost through inclement weather, to report within six months, and other provisions were made, concerned with the question of local independence. In particular London was to be made the subject of a local inquiry, with a view to adjusting its position within the framework laid down by the NW&CC. Liverpool was to be brought within the scope of the national agreement, with national rules and conditions to be operative in Liverpool and District from December 1st 1925. Wages in Liverpool were to be brought in line with other grade 'A' towns as and from February 1st 1926 and in the meantime the local agreement was to be effective (100).

The National Building Workers lock-out of 1924 represented a crisis in the relations of unions and employers. The national structure for the joint regulation of pay and conditions, erected in the post-war years required a central authoritative negotiating body on both sides of the industry. The employers had strengthened and consolidated their organisation during the previous year. They required that the unions collectively

do likewise, in respect of the more militant sections of their membership. At Executive level the unions were committed to the principle of national negotiations, but high wage levels in Liverpool and London could not readily be assimilated into a national wage grading structure at a super 'A' level without encouraging parity claims from other large towns at grade 'A' level. The total number of strike days during the 1924 strike was greater than the aggregate of all strike days between 1921 and 1938 (101). Despite the determination on the employers side, the local autonomy which had been identified as the source of disagreement at the outset was not eliminated by the strike. The Liverpool operatives had effectively defeated both the employers and their own union leaders by upholding the local arrangements for wage negotiation. The Liverpool employers were prised out of the National Employers' organisation and local bargaining re-established. Liverpool was not assimilated into the national arrangements until 1942.

#### The formation of the National Joint Council for the Building Industry

The problems of operating a national agreement for the building industry were by no means resolved by the 1924 strike. It was not easy to reconcile identity by trade or by district with the operation of a uniform wage structure. On a question such as the payment for time lost through inclement weather, the interest of trades working out of doors were likely to be stronger than those working inside. Different emphasis and different priorities governed the individual unions. For bricklayers and masons, employed almost entirely on outside work, the question was more important than for carpenters. Various schemes were produced on wet-time payments, and the problem was raised during the 1924 strike (102).

When terms of settlement were reached in August there was no provision for wet-time payment. A special committee was planned to give further consideration to the question, but the Executive of the AUBTW was reluctant to settle for so little. It decided as a gesture of protest, to disaffiliate from the NFBTO and their decision was ratified by a ballot of the members (103). On March 27 1925 they left the Federation. Unable to induce that body to make the issue a priority in the settlement of the 1924 dispute the AUBTW wanted to establish their freedom of action on the issue (104). Their break with the Federation, and the NW&CC shook the precarious unity which had been established, and indeed called into question the very existence of the National bargaining machinery (105).

There was unanimous agreement on the need for a revision of procedure, but the split between the unions was a central problem in moves to restructure the industry's negotiating machinery. Proposals were devised during 1925 for a new National Joint Council for the Building Industry, to operate in accordance with the basic premises of the NW&CC, subject to some revisions. The main change concerned the method of adjusting wages. Under the NJCBI it was suggested wages should be adjusted by two methods. Firstly they should fluctuate in accordance with changes in the cost of living. And secondly they should be subject to revision where either party moved for a constitutional amendment to vary the index figure on which the sliding scale was based (106). When members were asked to vote on the new agreement, there was a high level of support coming fairly evenly from all of the unions which were still affiliated to the Federation (107). The NFBTE supported the proposed changes,

but made ratification of the proposed NJCBI conditional on all of the building unions adhering to the agreement (108). The AUBTW and the NAOP which had also disaffiliated from the NW&CC, were reluctant to accept the new procedure. Negotiators for the AUBTW were currently pursuing a claim for wet-time payment, or for a lieu payment of 2/- to 2/6 a week and they were not immediately prepared to commit themselves again to the uniform craft rate (109).

The new procedure was intended to allow greater flexibility and more local autonomy in the operation of the national grading structure. Districts and towns already on grade 'A' were to be permitted to put a case for an 'exceptional grade' rate. Existing rates would be stabilised until August 1st 1927 and the question of a differential between trades held in abeyance. Negotiators for the NFBTO considered the package acceptable. They were prepared to agree the 'exceptional rate' which it was felt would increase local autonomy, without undermining the principle of national negotiations. Coppock at least was confident that the 'exceptional rate' would not be interpreted as a rate below the national level (110).

Regional (or national) autonomy was to be furthered by attention to the situation in Scotland. The NCJBI seemed to answer some of the problems which had been raised in the operation of national negotiations over the previous years.

The new national agreement confirmed many of the procedures embodied under the old NW&CC. The craft rate was central to its operations, adjusted according to the sliding scale and with a new provision for constitutional amendment to permit alterations to wages and conditions. A national grading structure was still in being, but with greater flexibility

allowed for regional autonomy. It is not unlikely, given the employers' concern that the agreement should cover all of the building unions, that there was an informal recognition that no additional agreement should be reached on the question of wet-time payments. Although the NAOP and the ASWM remained outside of the new agreement, the AUBTW reaffiliated to the NFBTO shortly after the formation of the NJCBI. Hicks at least seemed to recognise that little progress could be made outside of the ranks of the Federation.

Further adjustment to the operation of the National Working rules was necessary to consolidate the joint relations between employers and operatives via the NJCBI. The wage reductions which resulted from the operation of the sliding scale between 1927 and 1930 caused considerable dissatisfaction amongst building trade workers (111) and there was some concern that wages slid in only one direction - downwards and that the basis of their adjustment bore little relationship to real fluctuations in the cost of living (112). Yet again the EC of the ASW reiterated the advantages of the national working rules, and the benefits which had accrued to the lower paid and country districts. Economic crisis and cuts in building, were not an auspicious context for a battle over the national agreement (113). But in 1930 claims were submitted for a minimum rate of 1/7 an hour, with the sliding scale so readjusted as to allow increases, but no further decreases in wages (114). Additional points included a claim for the 40 hour week in 5 working days, payment for time lost on account of inclement weather, and greater regional autonomy in negotiations (115). The employers responded with the demand that the painters' differential should be extended, that labourers should be classified in grades, with an increase in the differential between their pay and

that of craftsmen, that working hours should be shortened in winter-time and lengthened in summer and that employers should have freedom as to who should be used on the operation of mechanical tools. Following the employers' reply the Joint Executives of the NFBTO agreed to end their affiliation to the NJCBI in 1930 (116).

Leaders of the building unions were committed to the operation of national negotiating machinery for the industry. Why then did they disaffiliate from the NCJBI, which provided the medium for national collective bargaining? The explanation seems to rest in the employers' resistance to any concession in respect of the operatives' claim.

"Their attitude had hardened to such an extent that it was evident that nothing could be extracted from them... They held the very definite opinion and expressed it without ambiguity, that they were not convinced of the soundness of the operatives' claims." (117) At a time when unemployment and falling membership undermined the capacity of the unions to back their claim with action, disaffiliation from the NJC was a manoeuvre designed to emphasise their attachment to their objectives. The employers responded with proposals for a new national agreement which was to allow bonus payments - a proposal hardly likely to win acceptance by the leadership of the NFBTO. The proposals were to be submitted by the EC's to their members, with no recommendation, but before this could be done they were withdrawn, and a new scheme brought in which related both to procedural and to the substantive issues.

The new scheme drew together the arrangements governing conciliation as well as wage negotiations. In 1927 an agreement was reached for the prevention of disputes in the building trades. Arrangements already existed through the National Conciliation Board and through the Demarcation Committee for dealing with disputes, and the new procedures were not intended to supersede these. The specific object of the 1927 agreement was to prevent disputes, by establishing joint machinery for processing grievances & preventing strike action (118). The agreement provided for consideration of a grievance through regional and national panels, with the proviso that reference could be made to an appropriate Conciliation Board, to the NJC or to the Demarcation Committee where necessary (119). In the procedural revision of 1932 it was decided to incorporate the new conciliation procedures within the arrangements for national negotiation. The disputes machinery (with the exception of the National Conciliation Boards which were separately maintained) was accommodated within the national working rules, and provided in the future, the procedure for processing a dispute within the framework of the existing agreement (120).

Adjustment was made to current standard rates applied under the agreement with a grade 'A' rate ranging from  $1/6\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1/8$ , the lowest craftsman's rate - C1 being  $1/3\frac{1}{2}d$ . The operation of the sliding scale was to be retained, but provision was made for a special rate for London,  $1\frac{1}{2}d$  above the 'A' grade rate and exceptional and differential rates were to be allowed, questions of exceptional or differential margins being dealt with by their Council on their individual merits (121). The Council would establish standing committees, including a Procedure Committee, a General Purposes Committee, a Grading Commission and a Conciliation Panel, and would agree their

composition and powers (122).

The new constitution stabilised relations between employers and operatives. In essence it was a revamped version of the NW&CC, preserving the central principles of national negotiation and the craft rate, but incorporating for the first time procedures for settling disputes. The novel and significant feature of the 1932 constitution was this, the fact that it brought together procedures for negotiation and conciliation. The extension of responsibilities increased the authority of the central machinery and confirmed the commitment to it both of employers and unions.

The question of autonomy for Scotland was resolved by the formation in 1930 of a National Joint Council for Scotland. Previously a variety of agreements existed, some of them outside of the arrangements of the NCJBI. The employers were divided, but there was sufficiently strong feeling on proposals for a Scottish NJC for the issue to be pursued (123). The existence of differential rates encouraged the better paid craftsmen to oppose proposals which it seemed would lower their rates, if the principle of one craft rate were adopted. Where employers had attempted to follow the decisions of the NJCBI concerning wage reductions - for example in Glasgow - they met with resistance and it seemed that in Scotland it would be hard to standardise wage rates and agreements (124). Following the withdrawal of the Scottish employer bodies from the NJCBI a Scottish National Joint Council was formed in Dec 1930. Prolonged negotiations for a new procedural agreement took place and a settlement was finally concluded in April 1931, its main feature being the establishment of a 1/7d 'A' grade rate to be maintained until January 1932. Wages were to be regulated

in accordance with the cost of living index, in the same way as they were in England and the rate for labourers was set at 75% of the craft rate. A significant difference between the terms of the            for England and Wales and that for Scotland was the preservation in Scotland of the 44 hour week, to be worked for 10 months a year, with the 41½ hour week for December and January (125).

In Ireland there was little prospect either of incorporating the Irish towns into the arrangements governing England and Wales, or of establishing an autonomous negotiating body, at the national level for that country. Organisation centred on the largest towns in the North, and on Dublin and Cork in the South (126). There were separate negotiations for each town and the responsibility for initiating and carrying a movement for improvements in wages and conditions rested on the local branches. The situation was complicated by the presence of Irish based unions - the Workers' Union of Ireland, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, the Seamen and Port Workers and the Amalgamated T&GWU (the Irish section of the English T&GWU) recruiting mostly amongst labourers. This meant that even at the local level the English societies could not hope to dominate affairs, although the NFBTO attempted to extend its influence in Ireland. The co-ordinated movement more than doubled in size between the mid-20's and the mid-30's, from around 3-5,000 to over 10,000, although this did not necessarily reflect an increase in aggregate trade union membership. Rather it reflected a growth in the number of unions affiliated to the Federation (127). Although some successes were claimed by the mid-30's, there was little optimism concerning the possibilities for further expansion in the Irish Free State. It

was feared that the Free State Government might wish to limit the activities of bodies not having their headquarters in the 26 counties. The prospects of consolidating the Federation's limited presence there seemed slight (128).

Many of the early problems of the Building Industry Agreement had been resolved by the time that the 1932 constitution was brought into operation. But there was one difficulty which could not be settled by a constitutional provision. Since 1919 there was another agreement relating to building workers, the Civil Engineering Award, the terms of which were set by the FCEC and the general unions which recruited amongst builders' labourers. The craft unions and the federation had no voice in this agreement and there was considerable bitterness at an agreement which it was claimed was 'prostituting' the name of trade unionism (129). The practice of applying civil engineering rates, rather than those for the building industry was growing, to the detriment of the craft operative. The Civil Engineering award did not permit the controls - over recruitment of labour or overtime, which were an integral part of the building industry agreement and its application led to disputes (130). The general unions were already affiliated to the NFBTO and their presence threatened the influence in the long-term of the craft rivals. Ch. Beard, representing the T&GWU (following the amalgamation of the Workers Union into the larger organisation) pointed out that the Federation and its affiliates could not unilaterally dispense with the Civil Engineering Conciliation Board, which was as regularly constituted as the NJCBI (131). Within the Federation the issue was one of increasing concern, since the new projects of the thirties - the power stations, railways, swimming baths,

football stands and so on, were as often subject to the civil engineering awards as they were to the building industry agreement (132). The Emergency Committee sought a meeting with the FCEC, with a view to establishing a line of demarcation between building and civil engineering work (133). By 1934 a demarcation agreement was reached. The agreement gave tacit recognition to the rights of the general and labourers' unions to negotiate separately for a distinct area, known as civil engineering work. In itself this was worrying for members of the Federation, but in practice the agreement merely confirmed earlier developments. The general unions could not be ousted from civil engineering work. Their presence within the industry could not be wholly rejected. And so agreement was reached on the principle of demarcation which should govern the operation and the distinction between the two spheres.

No further revisions were made to the procedural arrangements for building industry negotiations during the 30's. On the wages front there was a tendency for earnings in building to lag behind the average, throughout the decade (134). Within the Federation it was noted that there had been more progress in other industries and in an attempt to compensate for this situation, the Joint Executives submitted a claim for 1d an hour in 1934 (135). In the context of a promising building boom the employers moved for a settlement which would fix wage levels for several years in advance. Agreement was reached on a new base figure of 65 which was to be substituted for the previous figure of 78. The resulting increase of 1d an hour was awarded in two stages,  $\frac{1}{2}$ d from 1 July 1935 and  $\frac{1}{2}$ d from 1 Jan 1936, with proportionate increases for labourers. But this was done only on condition that no further notice of a constitutional amendment should be submitted

before Feb 1940 (136).

The hands of the trade union negotiators were now tied. Whatever the prevailing circumstances, they were committed to the existing rates for another five years. W.J. Nichol of the Woodworkers Executive expressed a view currently prevailing in official circles justifying this move when he stated that previous booms had lasted for no more than two or three years at the most - even under the conditions, largely manufactured, of the boom in house building following the Wheatley Housing Act (137). No attempt was made to pursue other outstanding issues, such as the shorter working week and holidays with pay. (138) And it was accepted that no regradings by area should take place prior to May 1938, unless both operatives and employers were satisfied with the proposals. (139) By that time it was apparent, at least to some of the union delegates at the annual conference of the NFBTO that the five years tie-up had been a serious mistake (140). There was strong dissatisfaction at the grass roots about an agreement which ended, for such a long period, the right to make a further wages application and determined but unsuccessful efforts were made to change the situation (141).

National negotiating machinery for the building industry was firmly established with the concurrence of the employers by 1939. The shift in the locus of negotiations which had been encouraged by the events of the Great War was confirmed against the very different background of economic depression and defeats for working class organisation, in the inter-war period. Early arrangements had been adapted to permit greater flexibility in the operation of the working rule agreement. Autonomy had been granted to Scotland and maintained in Liver-

pool, despite intensive opposition in the latter case. Exceptional rates had been allowed, although so far only London had achieved the 'exceptional' status. But the principle of one craft rate was maintained as the central feature of the agreement, within a framework of district grading and subject to variation either by the sliding scale, or through constitutional amendment submitted by either party to the agreement. Most important on the trade union side, the inter-war years confirmed the co-operation which had been pursued since the inception of the national bargaining machinery. The consolidation of collective bargaining at the national level was accompanied by the confirmation of the union structures which were established in the wake of the war.

#### Trade union structure in the inter-war years

The processes of building production remained essentially craft based during the inter-war years. It is true that new areas of work were emerging which blurred the traditional distinctions between skilled and unskilled - steel erectors, woodworkers engaged on formwork shuttering and operators of mechanical diggers could not be classified within the traditional trades, yet their work was by no means unskilled. But the craftsmen, the woodworkers, bricklayers, plasterers and the rest, remained central to building production. And it was their trade unions, the ASW, the AUBTW, the Painters and the smaller craft societies which consolidated their hold on the industry during the period 1920-39. The internal arrangements governing the individual unions changed little during this period. It is in the area of inter-union relations that the most significant adjustments were made.

The unofficial organisations of the pre-war years were revitalised in a series of rank and file movements which were closely associated with the Communist Party and the Red International of Labour Unions. The Building Workers' Minority Movement, founded in the 1920's was superceded by the Builders' Forward Movement in 1932. In 1935 a new rank and file paper, the New Builders' Leader was launched with funds left over from a strike in London (142). The paper was created 'out of the movement towards unity and fighting strength' and stood for unification of the building trade unions and for an extension of trade union democracy (143). The circumstances surrounding the wage settlement of 1934 encouraged support for the unofficial organisation. The Joint Executives abandoned the demand for 2½d an hour and a forty hour week, settling instead for the reduction of the datum figure from .78 to 65 - representing an increase of only 1d an hour at a time when the industry was moving to a new prosperity. Opposition to the sliding scale, the introduction of a guaranteed week, payment for statutory holidays and the abolition of overtime constituted the core of the NBL programme (144). But it was on the wages question that it made its strongest case, for the terms of the 1934 agreement were binding over the following five years, lending weight to the criticisms of the officials put forward by the NBL. Although the motivation for the paper stemmed from Communist Party members within the building trades a wide circulation was claimed. Many of the men associated with the paper were CP'ers - such as Jo Roots, Harry Weaver, Frank Jackson and Jimmy Manderston, but other contributors, such as Harry Adams, London Organiser of the AUBTW were members of the Labour Party (145).

Amalgamation of the building trade unions was a fundamental

tenet of the NBL which stood both for 'One Big Union' and for trade union democracy. The rhetoric on amalgamation had been absorbed from the campaigns before 1914.

The emphasis was on unity of action, on fighting to protect card stewards and to defend the working rule agreement on site after site. It was argued that

'the Union for the Building Industry is not an experiment but a fundamental necessity, not an idealistic product of the imagination but the only form of organisation suited to modern conditions of industrial struggle'. (146)

But the experience of unity on site, unity in action, could not be paralleled at national level where the situation was complicated by the real experience of merger since the syndicalists had fought their battles over twenty years earlier. When references were made to the 'unity of all building workers' they were not coupled to an account of the ways in which past amalgamations had restricted the control of the Management Committees and encouraged the centralisation of authority within the merged organisation. There was no reference when amalgamation was discussed to the effects of the creation of the ASW or the T&GWU. Although the movement for union democracy was fundamental to the NBL, no attempt was made to assess the impact of amalgamation on the democratic process. The NBL criticised the officials for their dealings with the employers but did not point out that if their own objectives were realised - namely the formation of one big union, this was likely to strengthen rather than to undermine the authority of those officials (147). The question of unity was important within the NBL where it affected the militants on site - at Earls Court, on the Exeter House Job and elsewhere. But con-

trary to Harry Weaver's statement above, it was not an integral part of the real work of rank and file activists in the inter-war years. The meaning of the 'one big union' had changed, both because of the creation of the large, amalgamated unions of the post-war era and because of the creation of the Communist Party as a focus for the political aspirations of militants. Amalgamation was not the key issue which it was represented to be, for activists during this period, Its inclusion within the objectives of the movement around NBL reflected the traditions of and the organisation within building production, rather than the demands of the thirties. Amalgamation was not, in this era, a real priority for the rank and file.

#### The Woodworkers

Under the terms of the formation of the ASW, it was established that rules be revised at a meeting of the GC in 1924, three years after amalgamation. The key change which was made at this stage was the creation of a full-time EC, comprising five members, Tom Barron, W. Nichol, D. Merson, A.G. Gossling and E.F. McDermott. (148) The increase in central control of activities and expenditure was crucial if the newly merged unions were to maintain their authority over their membership. Local identities, stretching to the Management Committee, may often have seemed more relevant to the member on site or in the joinery shop. But if the national dimension of operations, focussed on the new collective bargaining machinery was to be fully developed, then it was agreed by the GC, priority should be given to strengthening the conduct of national affairs, at the expense of district organisation. In 1924 there were 10 District Organisers, one for each of ten districts. When the decision was taken to elect a full-time EC of 5 members, the

number of District Organisers was halved (149).

The second measure effected by GC meetings in October 1922 and 1924 was the ending of the relationship with the colonies and former colonies. Members of the ASW had previously been permitted to maintain their union card if they migrated to Australasia, to South Africa, to Canada and to the USA. Branches of the ASC&J had been established in these places (150) and although each centre had its own Executive Board, the central authority of the parent organisation had never been relinquished. By 1924 it was apparent that this situation could not continue for much longer. In the USA and Canada the ASW was outclassed by the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners and the British organisation was not in the long-term able to survive. In Australia, New Zealand and South Africa the development of trade union legislation made the perpetuation of a union based in Britain very difficult. The General Council was in principle, unwilling to relinquish its overseas members, but the original connections proved impossible to sustain. Arrangements were drawn up to allow reciprocity so far as the exchange of members was concerned. By 1924 all of the overseas members had been given up. No further claim was made to recruit outside of the British Isles (151).

Apart from these two significant changes, the rules of the ASW were amended only in respect of the detail of operations during these years. Perhaps the most significant omission, if the ASW is compared with other trade unions established during the same period is the absence of a National Delegate Conference to make policy. The principle was accepted by the AUBTW, by the T&GWU and by many other unions. A national conference permitted, in theory at least, a clear expression

of membership opinion, to create, or to shape the creation of union policy. It was not a principle which attracted the leaders of the ASW. Frank Wolstencroft, GS of the union since the retirement of Cameron in 1925 was anything but enthusiastic. A national delegate conference threatened to permit the expression of political views which he preferred should remain unarticulated - or at least not given an official forum (152). When in 1935 the rank and file paper, the New Builders Leader was founded, it seemed that the campaign for union democracy was gathering strength. The question of a union conference was perceived by activists within the ASW and the NBL as of fundamental importance. A union conference might allow them the opportunities which were denied by the right wing nature of their union leadership. The rank and file movement endorsed the campaign to replace the General Council by a delegate conference (153). And in doing so they confirmed the worst fears of Wolstencroft that they would bring to bear within such a conference a political machine which was opposed to the leadership and policies currently governing the union. A delegate conference threatened the centralised control of union policy and administrative arrangements. Not surprisingly it was opposed by the GS and by the EC of the union.

### The Bricklayers

The AUBTW, like the ASW was consolidated during the inter-war years. The original constitution provided the basis for its operation, subject to some adaptation. Following the amalgamation, a special committee was set up to consider the question of organisation. The number of full time officials had increased with the rise in membership and the expansion of income during and immediately after the war. Organisers were often appointed at local level and supported from district

funds, so that the Executive prior to the merger, had little control over them. In 1923 the Committee recommended a reduction in the number of organisers and the standardisation of conditions of appointment (154). The payment of 25% of the wages of District Organisers out of general funds had been authorised during 1921. This move gave the EC an interest in, and a degree of control over the District Organisers. Henceforth EC approval was necessary before a man could be appointed (155). The right of a District to appoint its own organiser was just one facet of its independence. It assured that the person who was appointed owed his loyalty to the District Organisation and, whilst his wages were paid locally there was an incentive for him to maintain the organisation and income of the locality in which he worked. But with the intervention of the Executive, local independence was considerably undermined. Whilst the District could still nominate an organiser, they could not do so without reference to the union's central Executive Council. By making a contribution to the wages of organisers, the EC broke with the tradition of local autonomy and subjected District Committees to their own authority.

Perhaps the major change effected in the constitution of the AUBTW at this time was the inclusion of political objects within its aims. The question was one which was close to the heart of George Hicks the General Secretary, who had sufficiently renounced his syndicalist views to cherish political ambitions concerning a seat in Parliament. He doggedly pursued the issue against a resistant membership during the early 20's, and eventually in 1928 they accepted that the AUBTW would include in its rulebook political objectives (156). Finally the union had accepted a place in the Labour world enabling Hicks to go forward more easily as a prospective Parliamentary

candidate. He was elected MP for East Woolwich at a by-election during the life of the second Labour Government and held the seat, despite the setbacks for Labour, at the General Election of 1931 and thereafter until his retirement in 1950 (157).

### The Painters

The NSP faced more serious difficulties than the larger craft societies. The very high levels of unemployment amongst the painters, combined with the particularly vulnerable position of that trade in the face of the employers' attack during the 1920's to drain finances and membership. The union decided in 1921 to increase unemployment benefit but the membership rejected proposals to increase contributions, causing extreme financial stringency. In consequence the appointment of two national organisers was held up, and the one organiser currently employed by the union tendered his resignation because of the low pay which he received (158). But the appointment of national organisers was not postponed indefinitely. By 1924 two men were in post - W. Bonner and Victor Beacham; the number increased to three by 1927. Their role was primarily concerned with servicing the members in rural and less well organised areas, since in the larger towns members paid a levy to support a District Organiser. The financial problems which resulted from unemployment precluded a more centralised administrative control. By 1928 Gibson, the GS was hampered by the lack of funds available to pay the national, let alone the District Organisers. In February of that year members voted to dispense with the services of the national organisers (159). The society seemed to be on the point of disintegration and the appointment of national organisers had failed to prevent membership falling. In the face of a concerted attack by the

employers, the interest of many members was with the maintenance of organisation in their own locality, rather than through the country as a whole. But the viewpoint of the membership was by-passed by a decision of the General Council, in a meeting with the EC during February. On a proposal of Bro. Pickles from the EC it was agreed that the present organisers should be retained under a temporary scheme until other arrangements could be made (160). Formal arrangements governing the creation of policy within the NSP, were by-passed where those arrangements did not accord with the views of the union's leaders. The preservation of a scheme for national organisers, in the NSP as in the other unions, was a vital ingredient in the union's national authority supporting and upholding the arrangements for national collective bargaining. Without national organisers the employers might break the unity across districts and across trades it was argued. And whilst for many members it was the District which was the focal point for organisation, the GS of the NSP was required, by the logic of national negotiations, to assert the authority of the national organisation against the autonomy of the districts.

Like the ASW, the NSP had no arrangement for a national delegate conference to allow the expression of membership opinion. Like the ASW, the Painters Society had in membership communists and sympathisers who were organised around the paper the NBL, based especially in the London area. But the key problem for the Painters was the question of organisation. Only 24% of London painters were in the union and activities were centred on the need to boost membership and to prevent the use of semi-skilled and unskilled labour on painters' work (161). Schemes for reorganisation in the London District were proposed in 1935 with the intention of strengthening the base in the capital.

The LDC proposed the appointment of an additional organiser and an additional place on the existing District Committee, bringing it from 7 to 8. Their scheme was supported by the EC, but again it was the members who were reluctant to accept additional financial commitments, since the scheme involved paying an extra levy to support the new organiser. When put to the vote of the London members, the Reorganisation scheme failed to win sufficient support (162). The EC were concerned at the result of the ballot, and set up a sub-committee with three members of the LDC to draw up a further plan for organisation (163). The question of improving organisation and sustaining membership was crucial both to the Executive and to the District Committees of the NSP, as well as to the activists within the rank and file. Although NBL commentators suggested amendments to the projected arrangements - for example through area committees within the London District to look at the question of organisation, they did not oppose the scheme brought forward by their own leaders at District or at national level, since they recognised and shared the problem of combating non-unionism within their trade. For the 'cinderella' of the building trade the question of organisation was fundamental. And on this issue there was less scope for disagreement between officials and lay activists than on the more contentious questions of union democracy.

#### Inter-union relations between 1920 and 1939

The NFBTO provided the medium for liaison between unions in the inter war years. In 1920 it was newly established. Its future was uncertain and its general secretary, Richard Coppock was hardly known outside of the North-Western area where he had previously been employed as a Regional Official. By 1939 the Federation was established within the building industry by

virtue of the central role which it played within the bargaining process. The uncertainty and the setbacks of the 20's were forgotten as the NFBTO was consolidated as one of the most influential trade union federations in existence (164). Dick Coppock had established a unique position within the building trade world as a skilful negotiator and a shrewd diplomat, able to achieve by persuasion the objectives which could not be won through the authority of his position alone.

In 1921 there were 16 unions affiliated to the NFBTO with a total membership of 411,803 (165). They ranged in size from the newly formed ASW, the largest society, to the tiny Scottish Plasterers and the smallest of the English affiliates, the Slaters and Tilers. The general unions as well as the craft societies were accepted as members from 1921 when the Perth Agreement was concluded, allowing membership to the general unions providing that they respected the craft boundaries then in operation (166). Unions affiliated on the basis of the number of their members covered by the building industry agreement. But in addition to the affiliates there was the composite section some of whose members were directly associated with the Federation, without connection with the individual societies (167). In 1920-21 there were some 16,000 members in the composite section, but by 1924 numbers had declined, ostensibly because of a lull in organising efforts (168). Not all of the leaders of the craft organisations were enthusiastic about the development of the composite section. Some of them viewed it as a cheap evasion of their own higher contributions and directed their efforts towards restricting, rather than encouraging its growth (169).

Ironically, the status of the Federation, often viewed as the precursor of the 'one big union' was enhanced by the failure of amalgamation talks between the ASW and the AUBTW in 1922/23. The existence of the Federation derived from the preservation of separate and autonomous societies for each trade or group of trades. If the two largest unions could have merged it would have ensured their subsequent take-over of the membership and assets of the smaller unions in building production. And in that event the need and justification for a body such as the NFBTO would have been considerably reduced. But if the failure of amalgamation talks across trade lines promised a future for Federation, it was not clear at this stage how far the unity of the Federation should be taken. Could the Federation ensure a more rational allocation of existing resources and a more effective use of full-time organisers employed by the individual unions? Would it take over the control and direction of those organisers for the benefit of all of its affiliates? Would it create a Federation ticket which would be recognised by all affiliated unions? The logic of national negotiations seemed to suggest that it might. In 1922 the Emergency Committee discussed proposals for the co-ordination of organisers (170). Some societies, with only a small membership, had difficulty in sustaining a sufficient income to pay their organiser - as in the case of the Painters, and they might benefit, it was suggested, by arrangements to 'pool' the resources available within the Federation. Not surprisingly the scheme had little appeal to the leaders of the ASW, who viewed the project unfavourably. Tom Barron, a member of the EC of the ASW and later to become chairman both of the ASW and the NFBTO put the case against the proposals. The 'co-ordination' of organisers meant that the ASW paid, whilst other societies benefitted. It shifted the control of organisers

away from the individual society. It would strengthen the Federation at the expense of the affiliated unions and this was precisely what the ASW leaders were concerned to avoid.

(171) Their intention in creating and contributing to the Federation was exactly the opposite. They did so because it had the potential to strengthen their own position, both with their own members and within the building trades more generally. Schemes such as the co-ordination of organisers or the establishment of a Federation ticket, tending to counter their influence were unlikely to attract their support.

Whilst the Federation had a key role to play within the national negotiating machinery, it was never intended that it should supercede the rights of the individual unions whose views it represented. Both the NW&CC and the NJCBI allowed representation to the individual unions as well as to the Federation on the negotiating bodies, although it was the Federation's officials - the General Secretary and the President, who led the unions' negotiating team. The balance between the independence of the individual union and the collective representation of Federation affiliates was a sensitive one, but procedures were carefully calculated to avoid submerging the former. Although the constitution of the NFBTO provided a Committee structure with central machinery for the Federation's administrative control, it is clear that the most important decisions, especially those which related to the question of bargaining with the employers were pursued through meetings which were aligned to although formally outside the structure of the Federation. It was the meetings of the Joint Executives which took the key decisions concerning bargaining objectives, whatever the provisions of the Federation's constitution (172).

If decisions reached in national negotiations were to be binding, then they must be settled with the full concurrence of the societies concerned. The Emerg. Committee of the Federation was too small to allow one representative from every union and it was felt that the Executive Council did not carry sufficient authority. So regular meetings of the unions' joint executives were the best means to ensure the maximum unity on the operatives' side. The meetings were organised under the auspices of the Federation and they were chaired by Coppock. But their importance reflected the limitations of Federation authority in the face of the continued autonomy of the individual craft society.

It was often difficult to reconcile the views from a particular union with the priorities of the Federation as a whole. The problem was particularly tricky during the early days of the Federation when the question of structural adjustment by the unions had not been fully resolved. The Federation had not yet proved its value and for members of the AUBTW, concerned especially with the question of payment for wet-time, the results of the 1924 strike were unfortunate. Leaders of the AUBTW were committed to the principle of full amalgamation and may not have been disappointed at the apparent failure of the Federation. George Hicks, GS of the AUBTW and a member of the General Council of the TUC since 1922 was an ambitious and determined man. Like Ernest Bevin he saw himself as the architect of a grand amalgamation and he made a consistent and concerted effort to weld together the disparate craft societies. Cameron, GS of the ASW was a sick man and prior to his retirement in 1925 on grounds of ill-health, Hicks could justifiably have felt that he would be likely to emerge from amalgamation

as GS of a larger and more powerful union, with greater recognition, both from the employers and in the trade union world generally. The dissociation of the AUBTW from the NFBTO in 1924 almost certainly resulted as much from Hick's preoccupation with <sup>e</sup> these issues as it did from his concern with the matter of wet-time payments. It can be seen as a calculated move to break the unity of the Federation at a time when its popularity was lowered with a view to permitting the amalgamation for which Hicks had long campaigned. In 1925, with the AUBTW outside of the Federation, he again approached the leaders of the ASW, this time with a scheme for Confederation on a model which was reminiscent of the ISTC (173). But he underestimated the commitment of the ASW to autonomous organisation. He was countered by two moves which effectively undermined his strategy for full amalgamation. The first was the retirement of Cameron on grounds of ill-health. Frank Wolstencroft, Cameron's replacement was still a young man, who could expect to continue in office for many years (174). His election meant that Hicks could not automatically assume that he would be elected as GS of a merged organisation. Secondly discussions were pursued with the employers with a view to consolidating existing bargaining arrangements to ensure that the AUBTW was eventually brought back within the Federation. The advantages of separatism were effectively undermined.

The AUBTW was followed out of the Federation by the Amalg. Soc. of Woodcutting Machinists who were suspended in December 1925 for failing to observe Federation policy, and subsequently expelled.

The dispute between the ASWM and the NFBTO derived from the situation at Weirs, where it was felt, the ASWM had undermined

attempts by the Federation to establish trade union rates and conditions of work (175). Government interest in housing schemes, had led to experiments in house-building by alternative methods, and a special committee on new methods of House Construction had been appointed by the Labour government (the Moir Committee) to look into the matter. Progress was made with substitutes for the conventional house building materials of brick and stone, and Lord Weir, of Messrs G & J Weir had raised a scheme for the mass production of wood framed and steel encased bungalows (176). The operatives objected not to the innovations suggested by the structures themselves - for as they indicated, standardisation had previously been used on army huts, and in other wooden building structures - but to the practices of G & J Weir in attempting to over-ride the terms and conditions agreed for the building industry (177). The building trades representatives on the Scottish Regional Council of the NFBTO (for the houses were scheduled for Scotland) attempted to open up negotiations with Messrs Weir, but were met with a point blank refusal to discuss the position (178). And in the meantime, members of the ASWM were engaged by Messrs Weir in the preparation of structural woodwork, thereby defeating the objects of other trades who were attempting to compel Lord Weir to observe building trade rules and practices (179). The EC of the ASWM claimed that the work which their members were doing was sawmill work, and that it was not therefore within the jurisdiction of the NFBTO or its affiliates (180). Their members were connected with Federations in every industry, argued the leaders of the ASWM, and it was a vital principle that the union should have the right to control its own members where they were outside building industry rates and conditions and employed according to their agreement with the

employers (181). The situation was insoluble. The NFBTO could not abandon their claim to the work, for it would have established a serious precedent regarding the rights of their affiliates to work on pre-fabricated components for mass production, whilst the ASWM would not relinquish their claim to control their own members on other than building trade work. The Emergency Committee of the NFBTO decided that the ASWM were not carrying out Federation policy and recommended their exclusion from the NFBTO. This position was endorsed by the Federation's Executive and the ASWM were subsequently expelled (182)

The Federation was now seriously in disarray. The NAOP had seceded for the second time and with three of its major affiliates gone numbers and income were reduced. (183) The influence and credibility of the Federation were seriously undermined. Leaders of the member unions were bound, in the circumstances, to review their continued support for the Federation. The ASW, whose leaders had provided the momentum for the operation of the Federation debated the question at a special meeting. Withdrawal would certainly mean the dissolution of the Federation, with disadvantages for the woodworkers themselves. 'The ASW has been the mainstay of the Federation' said the chairman, Tom Barron, in his statement to the General Council, 'We have every reason to believe that the employers would take full advantage of a further cleavage in the ranks of the operatives.' (184) Two principles remained fundamental to the continued support of the ASW for the Federation. Firstly the question of the one national craft rate reinforced the opposition to pbr. And secondly the Federation provided a medium for controlling the activities of the rank and file, especially where, at the local level, united trades' federations could be sustained. 'One certain result which

would follow from the demise of the NFBTO would be the springing up in every enterprising district of local federations, probably started by our own people. It would be well nigh impossible to prevent our branches becoming affiliated to such movements, nor would it perhaps be wise to prevent them if such were possible. Having regard to the operation of national settlements on wages and hours, the activities of such federations, freed from national control (his italics) would give rise to sporadic local strikes all over the country, creating general chaos in the industry, probably resulting in a national lock-out.' (185) Support for the Federation was closely allied with support for the national wage structure and with the national and co-ordinated control of trade movements by the Executive. It was on this basis that ASW commitment to the Federation, though shaken during 1925-26, was maintained.

Inter-union relations in the building industry were further ruffled by events during the General Strike. The NFBTO was given co-ordination of building trades activities in connection with the strike by the TUC - in particular by Bevin (186). This formal recognition from the Central Strike Organisation Committee of the role of the Federation was particularly galling to Hicks, himself one of the 'lefts' on the General Council. Whilst officials from the Plasterers' union agreed to meet the other building trade union representatives under the auspices of the NFBTO, no representative of the AUBTW was present. They were, they said, 'exceedingly busy' (187). A message was later received from them, stating that the AUBTW could not co-operate with the NFBTO over strike action, since their policies differed regarding the withdrawal of labour (188). The NFBTO's position was that there should be no withdrawal of labour on working class housing built under subsidy, either through the local

authorities or by builders operating under the Chamberlain Act, 1923. All repairs to working class property, and repairs to all sanitary arrangements were to be allowed to proceed. Similarly there was to be no withdrawal of labour from work on schools, or on repairs and upkeep of existing hospitals, clinics or sanatoria (189). In a letter to Walter Citrine, on 11th May, George Waddell, President of the AUBTW, commenting on the TUC's decision to instruct the NFBTO to act in an advisory capacity on building trade matters suggested that the Federation had already, by its interpretation of TUC policy on housing and hospitals, created the fear that it was concerned only with keeping men at work. The AUBTW, by contrast, was concerned to bring more men into the fight (190). The sub-committee of the AUBTW's EC, appointed in connection with the General Strike argued that the fight must be short and sharp, and that in order to win it was essential to involve as many men as possible in the struggle (191). Their policies were designed to this end. On housing, 'working class housing' was defined as homes built for let but not for sale; on hospitals, maintenance work on existing hospitals only was to be allowed, with work on nursing homes and clinics stopped as these were regarded as outside the category of hospitals. The building of new schools was similarly stopped, and work on sanitary arrangements was allowed only for working class homes, or in the interests of public health. A request for a permit for maintenance work on the Savoy Hotel was refused (192). The policy of the AUBTW was then, characteristically more militant than that of the other trades. And there was some bitterness regarding unions which kept members at work in order to protect their funds.

The animosity generated between the ASW and the AUBTW during the strike was, ironically, worsened by the decision to end it.

The conservative leadership of the ASW expressed its outrage with the 'inglorious and humilitating capitulation of the TUC'. The desertion of the miners and the failure to secure pledges against victimisation from the employers before the resumption of work was ordered represented, in their view, 'one of the most deplorable and discreditable episodes in the history of trade unionism.' (193) George Hicks, as a member of the General Council, was of course party to the decision, and he was subjected to personal criticism for the part he played. He railed at such attacks - especially when they were made within the annual conference of the NFBTO, where, since the AUBTW was not affiliated, he was unable to reply. Such calumnies he claimed had 'widened rather than narrowed the breach between officials of the Federation and the organisations concerned.' (194) The ending of the strike had provided an unusual twist to relations between the AUBTW with its militant identity and the more conservative society of woodworkers. But it presaged a restoration of relations between the two organisations, for the AUBTW reaffiliated to the Federation in the following year.

Despite the apparent success of the Federation in consolidating its hold, the 'one big union' had not been entirely abandoned. Its cause was revived by a resolution at the annual conference of the NFBTO in Norwich in 1928. The matter was removed from the hands of the delegates by Wolstencroft who successfully moved that a committee of three members should be set up to draft a scheme for amalgamation to include rules, contributions and benefits. (195) By so defining its terms, Wolstencroft

ensured that the divisive problems, concerning the financial interests of the members of the craft societies would be emphasised when the committee reported. It was an astute move, for Wolstencroft himself had no desire for amalgamation.

A skeleton scheme for amalgamation was presented a year later. It encompassed a membership of  $\frac{1}{2}$  million, 600 local trades committees and 18,000 trade management committee men, nearly 500 area committee men and 11 Divisional Officers, 20 Executive members, 150 organisers and a Head Office Staff of 100 (196). No one of course was opposed to the principle of amalgamation. In the abstract it could generally receive unanimous endorsement, but concrete proposals were received with less enthusiasm. Wolstencroft ensured that the concrete proposals were carefully elaborated. How many full-time officials would there be in the new union? Had account been taken of District Officials who were paid from the funds of their own Committee, rather than from General funds? The ASW had 64 local officials he pointed out. The estimate of 150 officials altogether was very low. Was it certain that the new society could afford all of the fulltime organisers currently in post? (197)

At the Special Conference on Amalgamation, held in Chester between October 15 and 17 1930 Wolstencroft pursued his objective of defeating the amalgamation proposals. The scheme for the 'one big union' received more attention than it might have done because of the disastrous economic climate in which the unions were operating. As membership fell and finances dwindled there was an economic imperative for the smaller societies to rationalise their resources (198). But the ASW had no need to absorb the liabilities and the difficulties

of the smaller organisations. Again Wolstencroft emphasised the problems of amalgamating the existing full-time officials into one efficient unit. Efficiency, he argued, militated against it. The promise of continued employment within the new union was designed to nullify the opposition of existing full-time officers. In stressing the need for efficiency the GS of the ASW highlighted the difficulties in this sensitive area, appealing to the conservatism of full-time officials as a means of overthrowing the scheme for amalgamation. Ironically, in view of his continued opposition to a delegate conference within his own union, he spoke vigorously in favour of democratic rights in the new organisation, stressing the importance of elections for an EC of limited size, even though this might produce an Executive emanating from only one of the constituent unions. Existing leaders of Federation affiliates would be unlikely to abandon their senior positions with so little chance of a comparable office within the merged society. Sixteen societies were represented within discussions, each with its own full-time General Secretary. The Federation could accommodate this number of leaders, but it was unlikely that they could be so easily assimilated into one big union. Having pointed to the interests of leaders and officials alike in preserving the status quo, Wolstencroft turned to the particular interests of his own members. Craft traditions involved not simply an abstract pride in a knowledge of the trade and a particular expertise with the tools. It also involved allegiance to a particular craft society with its own contributions, benefits and values. It was a financial commitment which corresponded not simply to a difference in administrative practices, but to the expectation of particular benefits. The payment of superannuation benefit was fundamental to the operations of the ASW. Members paying for superannuation were currently in the majority

and Wolstencroft made it clear that if no provision were made for superannuation, then the scheme stood not the remotest chance of receiving the support of members of the ASW (199).

In the face of this determined opposition by the leader of the largest of the building trade unions, a man who in some ways stood to enhance his personal position through such an amalgamation, the scheme for amalgamation was unlikely to succeed. George Hicks, for so long a supporter of amalgamation was less vocal on this occasion, expressing hesitations at the 'big bureaucratic machine' which was likely to be the immediate outcome of the merger. He may have felt some hesitations about amalgamation into a machine headed by Wolstencroft who was now also a member of the GC of the TUC. Craft differences apart, the two men had a profoundly different approach to political and trade union matters and the preservation of the AUBTW on a separate and autonomous basis may not have been unattractive to Hicks by this stage. There had after all been difficulties in maintaining the unified structure of Federation during the previous decade, and in the words of one commentator: 'The Federation was purely a courtship and if we could not agree when we were courting, only a madman would enter into marriage.' (200)

The discussions at Chester suggest that there was still a lobby for amalgamation, a lobby which came largely from the left and in particular from the Communist Party. But although the discussions were pursued for three years and led to a vote of all of the members of the affiliated unions, they never presented a serious challenge to the prevailing structure. There were hesitations amongst the leaders of all of the unions concerning

the prospects for such sweeping change (201). And these hesitations were encouraged and endorsed by the leaders of the largest of the building trade unions, who preferred the influence allowed to them by participation within the Federation to the responsibilities which would be incurred by the amalgamation of all of the unions which were currently affiliated. The failure of discussions on amalgamation confirmed the position of the Federation as the medium for bringing about the unity of the building trade unions. It showed too the extent to which the position of the Federation had already been consolidated. Further progress on full amalgamation was not possible, despite numerous resolutions and campaigns inspired by the left, until the Federation's value to the leaders of the ASW had been diminished.

The position of the Federation had been reinforced by the repeated decisions against amalgamation. The GS of the Federation had assumed a new authority by virtue of an alteration to the rules of the Federation which required that he should be elected by a ballot vote of the membership, and subject to re-election every six years. Arrangements governing the Regional Councils had been adjusted at the same time so that the NEC could, at their own discretion, appoint full-time officers to the Council to act as secretary (202). These changes ensured that the Federation was developing its own body of officials, with their own particular vested interests in the preservation of the existing structure. As officials of the affiliated unions upheld the status quo because of their personal position, so too officials of the Federation were unlikely to favour changes which gave them a less advantageous position than the one which they currently held.

The last half of the thirties saw the consolidation of the Federation, with minor adjustments to its constitution to allow increased representation to the larger unions, especially the ASW. Its affiliates now included the T&GWU, following the merger of the Workers Union and the 'Altogether' Builders Labourers into that organisation. Also represented on the labourers side were the NUG&MW and the NBL&CWS. Leaders of the ASW were concerned to limit the control exercised by the other organisations, both over policy and administrative matters. The ASW was the largest contributor to the funds of the Federation and they wanted more effective control within it.. Amendments were proposed to the effect that the Executive Council (to be renamed the General Council) should comprise one member from each union up to 10,000 affiliated members, 2 representatives for 20,000 members and one additional representative for each additional 10,000 members or part thereof (204). This change would weight the balance in favour of the larger unions, who could currently claim to be under-represented within the Councils of the Federation. The Annual Conference of the NFBTO in 1936 rejected the proposals (205). The ASW indicated that it might disaffiliate from the Federation, if given no satisfaction on these matters, but the threat was not made too seriously. The GC of the ASW recognised that:

'It is undesirable, in the best interests of solidarity that the ASW should cease to be affiliated with the Federation, whilst recognising there is a limit to the forbearance which must be shown to some phases of activity. Therefore we sincerely hope that the efforts of the EC to limit the activities of the Federation within which it should operate will be successful.' (206) It was proposed that six months notice

should be given of the ASW's intention to withdraw, if the principle amendments outlined by the ASW were not accepted at the 1936 conference. A ballot of the membership produced a slim majority in favour of continued affiliation (207). But the objective was, nonetheless achieved. It was agreed in 1937 that an ad hoc committee of 7 representatives be appointed to examine the constitution and make recommendations (208). Wolstencroft was to chair the committee, which was to report at the next conference.

Many of the resulting changes served merely to confirm and stabilise the existing practises within the Federation. The title of the main committee for example, hitherto known as the Emergency Committee, was now to be changed to the Executive Committee, whilst the former Executive Council now became the General Council (209). Some of the intentions behind the original proposals put forward by the ASW were incorporated in the new constitution. The structure of the General Council, for example was to be altered such that there should be two representatives for the first 10,000 members, and one additional representative for each further 15,000 members, instead of the previous arrangement which allowed one representative for the first 20,000 and one for each further 20,000 or part thereof. The effect was to give each of the seven largest unions an additional representative, making a total on the new General Council of 47 (210). Full-time administrative officers of the affiliated unions were now to be eligible for seats on the General Council - a decision which was of particular importance to the ASW which had a full-time EC from 1924. The size of the new Executive Cttee was to be increased from 6 to 7 to avoid a stalemate in the event of their being a division of opinion, and the EC was to be elected by and from the GC,

with submission of nominations prior to the annual conference, and election by means of ballot papers taking place at the conference itself (211).

The problems of reconciling the interests of all of the societies, both large and small, was common both to the NFBTO and to the FEST which was reconstituted in 1936 to form the CSEU. In the building trades it was clear that the ASW could not dominate the Federation by virtue of its size alone. It claimed in 1938 an affiliated membership of some 86,469 out of the NFBTO's membership of 266,003, that is approximately one third of the members. As a craft society, with interests defined in relation to woodworking rather than to building production as a whole, its leaders had no aspirations to organise along industrial lines. It was instrumental in establishing and maintaining the Federation as a vehicle to liaise with the smaller unions, and to ensure its own influence in defence of the standards - in particular on time payments, which were associated with craft organisation. For this reason its representatives were prepared to accept a Federal structure which gave less representation to their members within the leading councils of that organisation, than their numbers in fact justified. Even after the revisions of 1938, the ASW claimed only one sixth of the votes for the Executive Committee for example, although they had one third of the Federation's members (212). Wolstencroft was concerned to ensure that his society always had adequate representation to sustain its case against the smaller unions and the T&GWU and the G&MWU. The last two unions together claimed some 18% of the affiliated membership, more than the AUBTW which was the second largest affiliated union (213). But he could count on the support of the other large craft unions on many of the issues which concerned him,

though on political matters the AUBTW was not always reliable. A compromise which permitted his union a lesser influence than its numbers strictly warranted was acceptable within the Federation framework.

Within the engineering industry, by contrast, the AEU was still not affiliated to the CSEU in 1939, although all of the other main engineering unions were in membership, with the exception of the Foundry workers who joined only in 1942. Like the NFBTO the CSEU included both the T&GWU and the G&MWU, but it could still be dominated by the AEU in membership terms. Skilled craftsmen in engineering production were more vulnerable than building tradesmen to innovations in the production process. Semi-skilled workers were used in many areas which had in earlier years been the preserve of the fully qualified craftsman. The AEU was obliged during this period to broaden the scope of its recruitment in response to the encroachments of the two general unions. There was a greater similarity in engineering than within building production in the range of tasks which was undertaken. The distinctive occupational demarcations in building - between carpenters, bricklayers, painters, plasterers and so on was not paralleled in engineering. Leaders of the AEU were, unlike the representatives of the ASW, inclined to favour organisation along industrial lines as a means of controlling the activities of semi-skilled workers. Their objectives conflicted with those of other societies within the Confederation which preferred an arrangement which upheld their own autonomy. If the AEU had affiliated to the CSEU it had the potential to dominate proceedings solely because of its size, unless its representation was scaled down within the leading bodies. The AEU had 333,619 members at the end of the inter-war years, so that the principle condition of AEU

affiliation was that it should be denied the voting strength which it could claim because of its size. Such a condition was unacceptable to the AEU which remained outside the CSEU until after the 2nd World War (214). Whereas in building the Federation was strengthened by the participation and support of the largest of the building unions, in engineering at least the opposite was the case. The Confederation was established against the objectives and without the support of the AEU.

In the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation which linked unions of craftsmen and other workers in printing, the largest society, The Typographical Association was several times larger than most of the other affiliates. The situation was in many ways comparable to that in engineering, yet the TA remained in membership of the PKTF, accepting a structure which was weighted in favour of the smaller societies as regarded representation on the Federation's leading bodies. The TA Executive countered the inequitable arrangements for representation by restricting the scope and functions of their federation. Despite proposals by the employers for an industry-wide agreement in printing negotiated through the PKTF, the TA leaders refused to relinquish their autonomy in bargaining. They went so far as to allow the PKTF to negotiate on the subject of working hours but they adamantly refused to relinquish their rights to negotiate independently on wages. Indeed on major industrial issues the TA went its own way with scant regard for the views of other trade unions represented on the PKTF.

Both in engineering and building, but not in printing the primary purpose of the Federal organisation was its role within collective bargaining. Since the consolidation of national negotiations for both industries just after the first world war,

there was a need for joint working arrangements between unions in order to present a common case to the employers in negotiations. The Federal structure reconciled industrial representation with craft organisation in both areas, although the balance between union autonomy and federation authority was a sensitive one. Below the national level the differences between the NFBTO and the CSEU were more marked. In the building industry the NFBTO was strongest at the national level, but at Regional and local levels it was confirmed, both through the procedures for dealing with disputes and through the initiatives allowed within the national structure for appeals on regrading. The appointment of Regional officials gave the Federation a presence in the provinces as well as in the capital and although it was the individual unions which were responsible for recruitment, 'unity in action' gave the position of Federation steward some meaning on the larger and more militant sites.

Nonetheless stewards held their credentials through their own trade union and at the general level it seems unlikely that the Federation was an effective force on sites in an industry where problems of recruitment and organisation were so intense. The Confederation was even less effective below national level than the NFBTO. District Committees of the CSEU were sustained in many areas, but only in a few instances - in Coventry, Birmingham and Bristol for example, were they engaged in local negotiations. And at workshop level there was considerable resistance to suggestions that an officer of the JSSC, holding a position as officer of the Confederation, should have any authority over members of another union. The CSEU provided a formal solution to the problem of multi-unionism at the local level, but its powers were severely restricted (215). Both organisations were most effective at national level. And in both cases it was

the leadership, rather than the members who were brought together as a result of the federal structure. In the words of a contributor to the NBL

'The Federation is a Federation of officials (Executive Councils) based on clearly defined craft interests, the membership not being united on the basis of the workers in the industry.'

(216)

### Conclusion

The craft societies in the building industry never recovered the membership and vitality which they had claimed at their formation. The impact of the post-war slump, the national building workers lock-out and the general strike was sharpened by the depression in building activity between 1928 and 1932. All of these events served to diminish the employment prospects for building workers and to lower trade union membership. And although recovery was heralded with the boom in housebuilding during the latter thirties, its effects were concentrated in the South and East of England and in other parts of the country the improvement was delayed until the initiation of government rearmament contracts.

The machinery for national negotiations, set up in the wake of the war was confirmed and refined, despite the weakened bargaining position of the operatives' side in the economic context of the inter-war years. The National Wages and Conditions Council provided the model which, with some reformulation set the framework for the National Joint Council for the Building Industry. And the National Working rule agreement embodied principles which remained fundamental to the settlement of wages and conditions in later years. The craft rate, the sliding scale and the district grading were central features of wage settlements

in building for at least the next forty years. Whilst the forty four hour week could not be sustained against the employers' attack in the early 20's, leaders of the Federation successfully consolidated the procedures for the settlement of key issues at the national level, with only minor adaptations to allow for the regional autonomy required in some instances. In only one case - that is in Liverpool, was there a failure to subsume local arrangements within the national negotiating procedures. But otherwise the national negotiations set up as an outcome of the first world war had effectively incorporated the various craft and district arrangements into a unified national structure.

The two major craft societies established in 1920-21 as an outcome of mergers between kindred trade unions confirmed their leading position within the NFBTO and within the NJCBI. The basic divisions between skilled and unskilled were reaffirmed by the separate bargaining arrangements for unions recruiting amongst unskilled and semi-skilled workers, through the Civil Engineering Agreement. And the application of new methods and materials, especially during the thirties threatened to undermine the craft workers. Yet for all this the craft societies retained their authority in an area of production which relied intensively on handicraft processes. Craft identities continued to be profoundly important and the separate existence of the craft unions in building - the Woodworkers, the Bricklayers, the Painters, the Plumbers and so on, was never seriously challenged.

The consolidation of the NFBTO was the most important single development in trade union structure during the course of this period. In 1921 the NFBTO was untried. Its capacity to

survive was unknown. Its stability was tested by the short-terms disaffiliation of the AUBTW and the loss of other less important affiliates for a longer period. Its resilience was undermined by the financial strains imposed by the depression. But its authority was boosted by its continued involvement in co-operation with the employers in stable arrangements for national collective bargaining, with the aim of achieving the upgrading of the lower paid and less well organised areas to the levels prevailing in the larger, urban centres. Dick Coppock, the GS of the Federation was a recognised force within the building trade world by 1938. There was a delicate balance, within the bargaining machinery and within the NFBTO itself, between the autonomy of the craft societies and the arrangements governing the industrial organisation of the Federation. The balance was adjusted to accord with the priorities and interests of the ASW, the dominant union within the Federation. But essentially the Federation permitted the preservation of the separate craft societies and interests of which it was comprised. Its existence corroborated the individual existence of its particular affiliates. And it upheld the authority and status of the leading officials in each of its member unions. The strength of the Federation lay in the fact that its existence seemed to justify the autonomous organisation of the individual craft societies. The Federation was by 1939 an extremely powerful organisation. And, as G.D.H. Cole noted in 1913, Federation can be seen as an alternative, rather than as a prelude to amalgamation.

### Pt. 3 The breakdown of the National Structure

There are two chapters within this part of the thesis. The first of them (chapter 5) covers the years 1940-60. Once again building activity was affected by the shift to a war economy followed by the disequilibrium of post-war reconstruction. The national bargaining structure, which had survived throughout the inter-war years, was undermined by the formal recognition of piece-work as an acceptable system of payment within the industry. This shift proved decisive for the credibility of the national machinery for collective bargaining. Trade union organisation was undermined by the more extensive use of labour-only sub-contracting and the building trade unions were threatened by declining membership and unstable finances.

In chapter 6 detailed attention is given to the process of merger. The level and nature of activity in construction in the 1960's is described and attention is directed particularly to the crisis resulting from the break-down of the national wage structure in bargaining. Consideration is given firstly to negotiations between kindred trade unions and secondly to initiatives for 'One Big Union'. The account concludes with the mergers which presaged the formation of UCATT in 1971.

CHAPTER 5.

THE NFBTO AND UNION STRUCTURE, 1940-60.

Introduction

The outbreak of the second world war promised a repeat of many of the experiences of the Great War for organised labour. Trade union membership, which had been increasing during the previous years, was initially disrupted by the movement of young men and women into the forces, but increased steadily for the latter years of the war, reaching a peak density by 1947/8 (1). The importance of labour for the war effort ensured that trade union and labour leaders would at some point be co-opted into the realms of government, the most notable example being Bevin's appointment at the Ministry of Labour (2). But on this occasion the supply of labour for military and for war production requirements was not left to chance. Military conscription was introduced in April 1939 - before the outbreak of war, and a schedule of reserved occupations was established, designed to channel skilled workers into the appropriate service, and to ensure that others were retained for essential war production at home (3). A category of 'protected establishments' was introduced, together with the Essential Work Order, which was designed to secure and retain workers for any establishment where production was declared to be 'essential'. Government ministers, and Bevin in particular, were concerned to control labour supply, and the directive powers which they assumed towards this end went further than anything adopted by their predecessors between 1914 and 1918 (4). The effects of this demand for labour were felt most strongly at shop floor level, and the shop steward movement, dispersed by the defeats of the inter-war period, was revived.

Post-war reconstruction renewed the intensive demand for labour which had characterised the war years. The election of

a majority labour government committed to social reconstruction along the lines of the Beveridge report, seemed to promise full employment and a better standard of life for the majority. The hopes and expectations which had followed the war to end all wars were revived. If the experiment fell short of the expectations, this did not end the demand for labour and the promise of full employment which remained a novel characteristic - by contrast with the inter-war period, for the workers in the fifties.

The buoyancy and confidence of labour in this period must be understood in this context. Political defeat for Labour in 1951 had not ended working class aspirations which were pursued at least in part, against the predictions and warnings of the prophets of slump (5).

Building activity was particularly affected by the changes of this era. The demands of the war-time economy, for munitions and shadow factories, for aerodromes, for mulberry harbours and for camps were rapidly followed by the exigencies of reconstruction. Bomb repair work and house building were carried out against a background of political promises which were to prove unrealisable. Construction work was less amenable to manipulation than were the statistics regarding building output. War-time disruption had affected the supply of labour, especially skilled labour, to the industry and 'productivity' was, henceforth to be a central feature for consideration, not just of building employers and the government, but also for architects, planners and trade unionists. The shape of trade union organisation was modified in the context of sweeping industrial and social changes, and attention must be directed firstly to this area if the implications of structural change are to become apparent.

Collective bargaining in the industry was dominated, throughout this period, by the activities of the Federation and its leaders. It was through the Federation that building trade union leaders maintained their contact with the employers and with the Government. Despite strains in inter-union relations which recurred at intervals there was never again the suggestion - as there had been in the 20's, of an individual union severing its connection with the NFBTO. It continued to provide a medium for contact between building trade union leaders, and the conflicts of the 40's were not reflected in its composition. The role of the NFBTO will be considered, firstly for the war-time period and secondly for the years of peace. Attention will be given in each section to changes in the requirements of the construction industry, to relations with the government and to the impact of alterations in the payment system which was officially operated. Finally the effect of these changes on union structure will be discussed.

Pt.1 The Federation in War-time

Building activity during the latter part of the 1930's had intensified in response to stimuli from two directions. Firstly the private house building, undertaken very often on a speculative basis had provided employment for many operatives. Secondly, the renewed interest of government in the sphere of military production had ensured work on government contracts for this purpose, set up via consultation with the employers and the unions (6). The outbreak of war in August 1939 ended activity in the first of these areas. Housing construction was suspended, and, just as it had at the beginning of the Great War, unemployment in construction rose rapidly. In August 1939 109,000 building workers and 98,000 workers in contracting and

civil engineering were without work. By the end of 1939 the figures had reached 165,000 and 89,000 respectively, rising to the high point of 275,000 and 106,000 by February 1940 (7).

It was the smaller building firms which were most seriously affected by the cut-back in building output. Government contracting departments tended to entrust a considerable proportion of their work to just a few of the larger firms, with a paralysing effect on the many smaller contractors (8). A company such as Mowlem Ltd. received orders in 'bewildering succession' (9). John Laings, another of the largest companies had been involved at least since 1938 with defence projects ranging from sites for protective barrage balloons to the new headquarters for RAF Bomber Command (10). Government contracting departments accepted, in principle that building contracts should be distributed as widely as possible, but the NFBTE, with a large number of small firms in membership, was making bitter representation to the government, before the end of 1939 concerning the fact that in practice the larger firms received priority in the allocation of government work (11).

The concentration of activity in the hands of the larger firms was intensified, as building activity was increased from the Spring of 1940, in response to war-time requirements. Large construction contracts were placed in the hands of a limited number of contractors. Firms such as Wimpeys, Laings and Mowlems benefitted (12). As regards work commissioned by the Air Ministry for example, it was reported in 1942 that of the contracts for over £20,000, nearly a quarter of the value of all the work was allocated to just 1.7% of the total number of contractors. Thirty three out of the 121 contractors concerned

in contracts of this size, or 26% of the contractors had five or more contracts and between them this group had two thirds of the total number and over 70% of the total value of the contracts (13). Government Ministers argued that although they were concerned with the problems confronting the small contractor, it was necessary to allocate work according to the capacity and organisation of the individual firm. The scale and the problems of war-time projects suggested that large firms would be most appropriate for as long as building production was centred on larger construction projects. Between July 1941 and October 1943 the employing capacity of the very large firms was increased (14). Control of the construction industry was passed to the Ministry of Works, Lord Portal, from 1942. He worked in consultation with both John Laing and Godfrey Mitchell, Chairman of Geo. Wimpey and Co. (15). Allegations concerning the inequitable allocation of government contracts over this period were cleared in a White Paper issued in 1942 (16). But it was apparent that the larger firms had benefitted from war production through the centralisation of capital permitted by their work on government contracts. In the case of Geo. Wimpey and Co., the issued capital at the outbreak of the war was £475,000. During the war years the company accumulated a large quantity of plant, including diggers and mechanical earth removers and a very large fleet of lorries. Trading profits for the war years were consistently high, and like other large firms, Geo. Wimpey Ltd. ended the war in a favourable position to benefit from the opportunities of peace-time reconstruction (17).

From the Spring of 1940 employment prospects revived and unemployment amongst construction workers was reduced. In the

last figures which were published concerning unemployment by trade during the war, the numbers of unemployed in building and civil engineering were reduced to 56,000 and 38,000 respectively (18). Henceforth it was labour shortage which bedevilled contractors - particularly shortages of skilled craftsmen. Government Ministers were obliged to overcome this obstacle if they were to boost production as they intended. In June 1940 the Undertakings (Restriction on Engagement) Order (SR&) 1940 no.877) covering engineering, building, civil engineering, mining and agriculture was introduced. It required all jobs to be filled through a labour exchange, a move which was intended to prevent firms poaching from each other and to facilitate official control over the movement of labour (19).

Most important, from the perspective of trade union organisation in the industry during the war years, were the government's two key measures, the Uniformity Agreement and the Essential Work Order for Building and Civil Engineering, issued under the Emergency Powers (Defence Act). The requirements from war-time building labour, as seen from the Ministry of Labour, were mobility, flexibility and increased output. Not surprisingly, given the risks of aerial bombardment, much of the building work which was undertaken in the early part of the war was removed from the major towns and cities. Labour must be brought into the remoter parts of the country and employed on work which did not match up with the traditional definitions, by custom or by written agreement, of building or civil engineering work. And most important, the productivity of labour so employed must be raised in order that the engineering factories and the camps, indeed all of the war bases, could be used as soon as possible to maximum effect. The

success of operations in this area was a pre-requisite for the success of the war effort.

The Uniformity Agreement was introduced in June 1940 in an attempt to overcome the problems deriving from the fact that two distinct agreements were operating for construction work - one for the building industry, negotiated within the National Joint Council for the Building Industry, and another for civil engineering, agreed by the Civil Engineering Construction Conciliation Board (20). The Uniformity Agreement was reached by the parties to both of the existing agreements and operated on building or civil engineering jobs which were being carried out by, or on behalf of the Government, and specified by the Ministry of Labour to be essential parts of the Government's war programme. A Joint Board, comprising representatives of the employers and the unions was set up to administer the agreement and to deal with any difficulties which might arise from it. It was felt that the existence of two national agreements was bound to lead to problems of organisation and production and the standardisation of terms and conditions of employment on specified jobs could provide a solution (21). The major features of the agreement were that overtime should be paid after 47 hours, with an additional payment for night gangs; that fares to and from the job should be paid to men coming between 4 and 25 miles, and that after 25 miles the fares should be paid once only, with an additional allowance for lodging for married men, or others who, for special reasons had to maintain a home elsewhere. A Guarantee payment against broken time was allowed, where a worker remained available for employment for a period of one week.

The provisions of the Uniformity Agreement were different and in some respects it was argued, worse than the terms of the building industry agreement. In providing for a 47 hour week before overtime should be paid, its effects were to undermine conditions in those areas where a 44 hour working week currently applied. In many areas the working week was actually  $46\frac{1}{2}$  hours, but despite the minimal difference concern was expressed that the effect of the Agreement would be to encourage a general lengthening of the working week (22). Other aspects of the agreement would operate, it was feared, to the detriment of prevailing conditions. The Scheduling Agreement already drawn up to deal with wages, travelling and subsistence arrangements on war-time jobs had been applied only in rare instances and was superceded by the new arrangements. The Demarcation Agreement too ceased to exist on jobs covered by the Uniformity Agreement, and it was suggested in some quarters that it was the civil engineering employers, the most powerful financial group in the industry who were behind the new agreement (23). Matters were complicated by the fact that the Civil Engineering Construction Conciliation Board negotiated for the whole of the British Isles, whilst the Scottish National Joint Council for the Building Industry negotiated separately from, although along similar lines to the National Joint Council for England and Wales. Representatives of the building industry in Scotland feared that they would have little autonomy in a situation where the Agreement applied to Scotland for civil engineering purposes but not for building (24).

The most significant opposition to the Uniformity Agreement came from leaders of the ASW. It was they who made the running within the Federation over the content of the Agreement and the way in which it was introduced. The building trade agreement

was negotiated by and for craftsmen, and they had no intention of abandoning it for an arrangement which conceded, not just their kinship and joint interests with the unskilled operative, but the terms and conditions negotiated on behalf of the latter, and defined in the Civil Engineering Agreement.

'They were not going to allow anyone to say that a building trade contract was not a building trade contract even to get better conditions'. (25)

The detail of the agreement was criticised, but opposition from the ASW derived essentially from the fear that, in the move towards a unification of working rules for building and civil engineering, the voice of the craftsman would cease to be heard.

The latent mistrust which persisted between woodworker and bricklayer was brought to the fore in the conflict over the Uniformity Agreement. Bevin, together with Coppock, who was now at the Labour Supply Board of the Ministry of Labour, as architects of the Agreement, exploited the rift which had done so much to sour inter-union relations during the twenties. It would normally be expected that the ASW, as the largest of the Federation's affiliates, would set the pace in responding to an initiative of this type. If essential war production was to become effective, government must liaise with the larger civil engineering contractors to ensure a steady supply of labour, with the minimum of disruption concerning the definition of work on which it was engaged. And it was to this end that the provisions of the Uniformity Agreement were directed. The government was committed to observing prevailing arrangements for collective bargaining in industry, and the approval of the NFBTO was formally necessary before the new agreement could be introduced. Conflict within the Federation had, in the past,

centred on the question of the guaranteed week, a provision which was of much greater importance to the trades employed mostly out of doors - in particular to bricklayers - than it was to other groups. Discussions had been protracted, and the question of a contributory scheme had been mooted in the immediate pre-war period. To Luke Fawcett, and other representatives of the AUBTW within the Federation the promise of payment for broken time on a non-contributory basis outweighed any considerations regarding the implications of uniformity for the craftsman. Insofar as the guaranteed week was of a lesser importance for woodworkers, it had not been a priority for the Federation, and its inclusion within the new Agreement ensured the positive support of the AUBTW alongside the general unions, for the principle of uniformity (26). Dick Coppock gave his active support to the principle influenced perhaps by his old allegiance to the bricklayers' union. But the agreement embodied a notion which he had encouraged throughout his career with the Federation, that is the standardisation of wages and conditions across crafts and across regions, in order to elevate the worst organised and paid to the highest levels prevailing in the industry. Carried to its logical conclusion this necessitated the reunification of the building and civil engineering agreements in the move towards uniformity;

'they were two bodies now, but if he (ie Coppock) knew the feeling of the Operatives' side of the civil engineering industry, they would be willing to subordinate themselves into the greater machine. There should be one body and one only' (27). Coppock certainly envisaged the continuation of the principle once established after the war, and it is not impossible that he expected to head the 'greater machine'. His voice was added to those from the AUBTW in favour of the new agreement, and

together they won the case. Voting within the Federation conference on this question saw the ASW defeated by 179,313 to 102,208 (28). It was one of the few instances, within the history of the Federation, in which the views of the ASW did not prevail. A special appeal had been made to the interests of the bricklayers and in this way it was possible to divide the Federation and defeat the largest of its affiliated unions, which stood, throughout these negotiations, for the interests of the craftsman, and for a separate agreement in which the craftsman's views could predominate.

The Essential Works Order for Building & Civil Engineering, like the Uniformity Agreement, was introduced in order to break down the traditional arrangements which governed employment in the industry. The EWO was issued by the Government laying down conditions of employment over and above the joint agreements which were established. It had as its main object the speedy completion of contracts, and to this end it provided for direction of labour by the Government, (29) and for incentives to encourage output. Previously payment by results had been most common in civil engineering, although unofficially it had played a part in the speculative house building boom of the 30's (30). Its introduction as a regular practice, endorsed by employers, government and unions was a turning point for the industry, and a major element of controversy within the Federation.

The Essential Work Order, passed in 1941 gave to the Minister of Labour the power to designate as 'essential' the work carried on in any factory or other undertaking. When this was done, workers could not leave or be dismissed without the prior approval of the Ministry's local National Service Officer, a move which

was intended to deal with the problem of labour turnover. The Order, which could be applied to any contract, not merely to government work, was applied only where conditions of work were deemed satisfactory, with provision of minimum standards for welfare and training, and payment of a guaranteed weekly wage. It was also proposed to register 'building volunteers' who would go wherever they were sent by the Minister of Works and Buildings with special inducements in regard to holidays with pay, payment of a guaranteed week, and protection under the Schedule of Reserved Occupations (31). When Bevin raised the matter with the Federation's leaders in May 1941, objections were immediately made to the proposals concerning pbr. Nonetheless Coppock was informed that the Order was to come into effect almost immediately and attempts were hurriedly instigated to bring the Executive Committee of the Federation together with the Minister on 6th June 1941 this failed to obtain modification in the Order, which was signed three days later. Irresolution was replaced by capitulation. The Order was accepted and pbr was officially introduced (32).

Opposition to the EWO, like opposition to the Uniformity Agreement was most forcefully expressed by the leaders of the ASW, and in particular by Wolstencroft. Central to his objections was the belief that there was no justification for departing from the plain-time method of payment. It was 'the very principle upon which the organisation had been built' and it had 'been sold, and had been given away within twelve days'. (33) The plain-time system meant control over the pace and output of each job, over the quantity and the quality of production. Payment by results, on the other hand, was associated with the use of diluted labour, with the erosion of the craftsman's

status and with an end to restrictions on entry to each trade. The introduction of pbr should not be allowed merely because Bevin was at the Ministry of Labour, argued Wolstencroft, since it would not have been permitted from any of his predecessors. And in any case the government was guilty of violating its own undertakings in regard to the trade union movement, by failing to observe the existing machinery of negotiation within the industry (34). Wolstencroft spoke for the older generation of craftsmen, and although none of the leaders of craft unions was enthusiastic in support for pbr, no-one else was prepared to go so far in maintenance of craft principles, when the EWO offered sufficient carrots to encourage acquiescence (35). Within the Painters' Executive, as well as within the leadership of the ASW, there was a division of opinion on the matter (36). Payment by results was prohibited by the rulebooks of both organisations, yet by accepting negotiations with the civil engineering employers, who were already committed to bonus, its introduction in the context of building work was made the more likely. Perhaps the most important factor for the Federation's negotiators during their brief skirmish with the Government was the recognition that payment by results was already being operated in many areas and that the chances of eliminating it, in the context of war production, were slight (37). In any event outright opposition would have involved severing connections with the government & mobilising the membership for a fight at a time when the war effort seemed to demand maximum co-operation in the attempt to increase production. Such an option was never seriously contemplated. Rather, it was hoped to influence the government through the TUC General Council - a move which Luke Fawcett accurately predicted, was unlikely to lead to any dramatic changes in

government policy. Payment by results could be controlled, it was suggested, even if its introduction could not be prevented. Attempts by Executive Members of the ASW to move the Federation in the direction of resistance to the government's imposition of pbr failed to carry a majority. The NFBTO was split, and again the ASW, the natural 'leader' within the organisation, was defeated on a key policy question (39). Other unions, in particular the AUBTW, which had a greater affinity with the labourers' unions, through their involvement in the civil engineering industry, were prepared to attempt to limit, rather than to eliminate pbr. Less exclusive than the Woodworkers, they were less vulnerable to technological innovations. They were perhaps less troubled by the need to prevent the dilution which had posed a serious problem for woodworking craftsmen during the first world war. It was recognised that pbr was of most relevance to the bricklayers, whose work was more readily quantifiable than that of the woodworkers on site. Yet in joinery shops and munitions factories, where machinery was already eroding the need for craft skills in woodworking, the implications of pbr were more threatening. As the production processes were standardised into tasks which could be performed by untrained labour, so they could be quantified, with payment made on a basis which related to output. And so too could dilutee labour be introduced, undermining the craft basis of an organisation such as the ASW.

The Essential Work (Building and Civil Engineering) Order, 1941 marked a watershed for trade union organisation in those areas to which it was applied. Firstly it was associated with the recognised application of a payments system which was, by tradition, an athema to the craft trade unionists. Bevin had

effectively browbeaten the Leaders of the Federation into submission, achieving his success by splitting the craft unions from one another. Secondly it signified the defeat of the ASW within the Federation, a body which it had brought into being and sustained through the strains in inter-union relations in the 1920's. The Federation embodied the separation of craftsman from labourer, the separation of the building from the civil engineering industry in accordance with the two district agreements which operated until 1940. Although it included the two general unions, as well as the NBL&CWS, their affiliation was allowed only on the basis of recognition of the rights and prerogatives of the craft organisations (39), dominated by the ASW. The impact of war-time changes called into question the distinctions and definitions which had previously applied. No longer were separate agreements to apply for different aspects of the construction process. And no longer was there such a clear distinction in the types of work which might be undertaken by craftsman or labourer. The traditional categorisation was more effectively broken down in consequence of the introduction of pbr and although much was made of promises of the restoration of pre-war practices, war-time innovations were to have a lasting impact on collective bargaining and trade union organisation in construction.

Government intervention in the industry and the extension of pbr were encouraged over the following year by the general shortage of labour. In a directive issued on 27 Nov 1941 the Prime Minister required the labour force in the industry to be cut from 920,000 to 792,500 during the first three months of 1942, and to be reduced to 600,000 by the end of 1942 (40). The Government broadened the scope for payment by results and this was reluctantly accepted by the unions concerned. Initially

the scheme had limited application but it was periodically extended so that eventually it covered the major operations such as housing and hutting. The ASW's General Council accordingly voted to amend their rules for the period of hostilities and in other unions, it was tacitly accepted that no more than verbal opposition would be made. Unions such as the T&GW, the G&MW and the Woodcutting Machinists were, in any case not opposed to the system, but the Painters accepted the fait accompli, and although the Plasterers who had reaffiliated to the Federation in 1933, suggested that their area representatives would not support any contract which bound their members to pbr, their views found little support. (41) Attempts to cut government building programmes, and to direct labour away from the industry whilst stimulating productivity, were thrown out of balance by the need to provide accommodation for the American forces in Britain under the 'Bolero' scheme. In a move to circumvent the chaotic problems of labour supply, building operatives were brought into a single labour pool for government work in order to encourage mobility from one job to another. Departments were no longer entitled to an allocation, but could draw on the available labour for completion of priority contracts. Building operatives were de-reserved, but their call-up was suspended on the condition that they transferred to priority work on government contracts (42).

This renewed intensity of demand for labour combined with the adaptation of production processes to encourage dilution. Just as the first world war had concentrated labour and production in war industries, removing building craftsmen from the processes on which they were traditionally engaged, so the events of the second world war served to break down the

barriers between craft and non-craft workers. This break down took two forms. Firstly craft workers accepted work which previously would have been allocated to labourers. And secondly labourers or semi-skilled workers encroached on tasks which hitherto had been the prerogative of the craftsman.

The skilled worker was accustomed to work with a labourer - one per pair for carpenters, one or two per gang for bricklayers. The reservation of craftsman without a corresponding allocation of labourers created an imbalance which was rectified at the cost for the craftsman, of the line of demarcation between the two. 'Designated craftsmen' paid at craftsmens' rates could be employed if necessary on labouring work for projects of national importance. Dissatisfaction was expressed by employers, as well as by trade unionists at such plans, but in a meeting with both sides of the industry Bevin pointed to the urgency of the task, and appealed to the patriotism of his audience.

'If the men on the job will turn their hands to anything just to get the job done, they can go back to the dignity of their craft and have all the demarcation troubles they like after the war ... I appeal to every man to forget his traditions' (43).

Subsequent changes in government policy did not reverse the trend to the erosion of the demarcation between craftsman and labourer. A new flexibility had been introduced in the types of work which each might be expected to undertake. As the diminishing reserves of manpower were used for a wider range of tasks so were the recruitment policies of the craft trade unions - closed for the most part to those who were not formally trained as craftsmen, called into question.

Organisations were forced to take into account the 'general craftsman', receiving building craft rates and conditions, but without the formal training normally required of members of the building craft unions. Bricklayers, carpenters, plumbers, painters and plasterers were all involved in this problem, for men could work at various trades in the course of their employment and in wartime, with simplified conditions and often on temporary work the tendency to employ this type of craftsman increased (44). At an annual conference of the NFBTO a review of organisation was proposed in order to take account of such changes, since the number of craftsmen, as a proportion of the total personnel in the industry was declining, and the scope for recruitment to craft trade unions was, therefore decreasing (45). The 'undeniable decadence of the apprenticeship system' posed a problem for organisations where it was expected that the members would have served their time. Even if the rules did not stipulate that an apprenticeship was essential before a new member could be admitted, craft conscious members sometimes refused applications at the branches from 'general craftsmen' without apprenticeship training (46). At a time when thousands of craftsmen were doing the work of general labourers, and where the distinction which had formerly been maintained between different types of work no longer held good, it was more difficult to resist the encroachment of the general unions (47). The problem could not be tackled within the context of the Federation, since it touched on the rules of each of the individual affiliates. But for many members, it raised the question 'was our structure satisfactory?' (48)

## Aircraft woodworking during the 2nd World War

The introduction of women onto many operations normally reserved for the fully trained craftsmen, further complicated the pattern of recruitment of the craft organisations. The effect within woodworking was especially marked, as it had been during the 1914-18 war, particularly in aircraft construction and ship-building (49). Women proved remarkably adept at acquiring the skills which craftsmen could assimilate only over an apprenticeship lasting several years. When drafted into aircraft production for example, women with no knowledge of woodworking tools moved rapidly, after a short period of training, from work on small sections to production of many of the large sub-assemblies from start to finish. Such work had been done by men in the past, but it was found that women on these jobs needed no more supervision than the men, and that the skilled nature of the work did not prevent them from equalling the men in terms of output (50). Clearly the situation was worrying for the craft trade unions, which relied, for their recruitment, on skilled male workers. The EC of the ASW was frustrated by the recruitment policies of the other woodworking trade unions, in particular the NUFTO, which like the general unions admitted women into membership. As they reported to their General Council in Feb 1942 'The EC viewed the incursion of female labour into our craft without complacency, but for obvious reasons could not completely resist it. Our view was, and is, that so far as is possible, it should be limited.'

A number of agreements were made with individual firms allowing female dilutees temporary membership of a section of the union, under the auspices of the Management Committee, but this type of membership raised problems, since it might involve branches in providing cards for small groups of women, and there was no

established rate of contribution. Moreover the value of membership on such a basis was dubious, since it seemed to preclude the possibility of women taking up trade union membership on a more permanent basis. Nonetheless this exceptional and temporary provision for women was continued although the General Council deemed that it was not advisable to admit women to a special section of the union. There was relatively little controversy on a question which, if answered in the affirmative, might seem to confirm the rights of dilutees within the trade. As in the first world war, ASW leaders were concerned to negotiate on behalf of the women to ensure that the rates of their own members were not under-cut. In 1942 an agreement was reached through the NJCBI governing the employment and wages of women dilutees (51). But at a time when the AEU was opening up membership to women workers, and when the question was the subject of considerable debate in other unions, there was little dissension on the issue within the ASW's leading bodies. In general the EC and the GC resisted changes in structure and recruitment policy, which encompassed the general craftsman and the women dilutees. The ASW leaders clung to craft traditions, making the minimum adjustments necessitated by changes in war-time production.

The craft trade unions were founded on controls on the quality and quantity of labour in each craft. Those controls had already been challenged by the imposition of pbr and by the equation of building and civil engineering for the duration of the war. The question of dilution related essentially to the adjustment which had already been made to the payment system itself. Was it possible to organise and negotiate on behalf of the semi-skilled without undermining the security and status of the craftsman? If semi-skilled workers were accepted into member-

ship, what would be the effects in regard to training and craft skills? (52) The issue was, potentially a controversial one, but its implications were not explored by the craft societies in building production during the years of the war. Like the Woodworkers, the Painters, who were in competition with the AEU for paint sprayers in the engineering industry accepted Jack Tanner's word that these workers, who were mostly women were only semi-skilled and so they abandoned their claim to recruit them (53). The trend towards a more open recruitment pattern, reflected in the wider trade union movement was not accepted by the building craft unions.

#### A 'new eminence'

Whilst the impact of war production threatened the basis of craft organisation, it also served to strengthen the central trade union bodies involved in consultation with the government. Pre-war consultations on defence matters were followed by the establishment of a number of liaison bodies comprising representatives of the employers, the building trade unions and the government. The Ministry of Works and Buildings, which was formed after the outbreak of war, with Lord Reith as the first Minister served to further the incorporation of building trade union leaders into the machinery of government. With Dick Coppock at the Labour Supply Board at the Ministry of Labour (54) and George Hicks appointed as Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Works in 1940 (55), it seemed that the building trade unions via the Federation would have a stronger voice on government measures affecting the industry. Conversely the government had a voice within the Federation and government influence would be brought to bear more directly where necessary through the co-option of building trade union leaders into their councils.

The need to maximise output ensured that the trade unions had an important part to play in the government's building and defence programme. Central involvement in the government's plans had its repercussions at site level, where Federation officers were appointed, by arrangement with the Ministry of Works and Buildings to oversee important government building jobs (56). The pooling of organisers by the various unions had often been suggested as a means of increasing co-ordination between the building unions, and furthering moves towards amalgamation. It had previously operated only in dispute situations, for example, in 1923/4, but it was during the war, under the auspices of government, that organisers first worked for a protracted period, with members of different unions on one site (57). Arrangements for the scheme were drawn up by February 1942 and by the end of March, 23 site officers had been appointed. Site officers, who were wholly financed by the government, were, effectively, trouble busters. They were present to see that any difficulties or disputes which arose were resolved without undue delay or disruption to production. As one site officer put it: 'if there was trouble on site, first of all with the Irish boys, the first in sent for a policeman, if he was no good you sent for a site officer, if he was no good you sent for the priest, you know, in that order' (58).

The scheme was a popular one with Communist Party members, committed, since the invasion of the Soviet Union by Nazi troops, to the war effort, and the maximisation of output. It was seen in some quarters as the basis for co-operation between different unions, and between the body of unions and the government (59). In practice it was being run down by the end of 1943, since many of the larger Government contracts were completed (60), and by July 1944 only 19 site officers remained. The number was

reduced to 10 by 1945, operating mainly in and around repair work in London (61).

The site officer scheme was designed to ensure the influence of central government, mediated via the national trade union organisation on sites which were vital for the war effort. With the example of the first world war less than thirty years earlier, the threatening potential of shop steward organisation and initiative were sufficiently important to encourage these appointments with a view to curbing site militancy (62). Yet the scheme provided a significant practical experience in inter-union co-operation at site level. One officer, regardless of his trade, covered all of the men on site. The experiment provided a rare practical example of co-ordination by Federation. It was also noteworthy because it developed a layer of officials who had experience of the difficult task of working at site level, with different trades at a time when the industry was operating a pbr system with different implications for each trade. Whilst the job itself was short-lived and whilst it is likely that some of the men who were site officers left the industry after the war, some of them remained as lay or full-time officials in the changed environment of the post-war years. The site officer scheme did not, in itself go far to tackling the problem of craft sectionalism, but for a few officials it set the question of inter-union co-operation into a different context - one in which they had practical experience (63). Variations in site conditions, and in the complexity of work necessitated flexibility in the application of government schemes for payment by results. The application of such schemes, was part of the work of the site officer in conjunction with job stewards and regional secretaries of the NFBTO. Joint Production Committees were set up to regulate standards and at one time there were

as many as 400 such committees operating on sites during the war years (64).

War-time conditions seemed to favour the growth in the number and influence of shop stewards in the building industry. The high level of activity and the size of war-time sites combined with the formal acceptance of payment by results to encourage steward organisation. A Building Trades Stewards Council operated in London, under the auspices of the London Committees of the various unions, and early in 1942 an Aircraft Shop Stewards Council was formed by the London MC of the ASW to bring together shop stewards from the aircraft industry (65). The problem of organising in remote areas, often removed from the framework of union activity which centred on the towns, was as difficult as it had been during the first world war. But the activity of shop steward organisations, such as the Building Trades Shop Stewards Council took second place for many militants to joint site committees concerned with production. This was especially true after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union (66). The NBI, which continued to be published during the war years, emphasised the importance of boosting productivity in response to the threat to Russia. Shop steward organisation was stressed insofar as it provided a means to increase output, an objective which did not, in essence, conflict with the intentions of employers or of the government. The operation of site committees and of many shop stewards - at least those who sympathised with Soviet Communism, reinforced the standing and the authority of the central trade union bodies, supporting the Government's war effort, until 1945.

Welfare questions assumed a new importance for a government committed to improving the efficiency of the labour force, and issues such as holidays, canteen facilities, lodgings and tea breaks provided a significant addition to the Federation's responsibilities at national level. During the war innovations were made to terms of employment on these, and other welfare questions. In 1943 a scheme for holidays with pay was introduced for the first time. In an industry where casual work was the rule, and where an employer would give a man a paid holiday only in the unlikely event of him staying with the firm for several years, this move seemed almost revolutionary (67). It provided for a system of holiday credit stamps, to be paid on a weekly basis by the employer for all operatives.

The provision for payment against time lost through inclement weather was introduced in the context of the Uniformity Agreement but was consolidated at the end of the war in new working rules for the industry which gave a guaranteed minimum weekly pay packet equal to 32 hours pay (68). The notice required for termination of employment was also changed, from one hour at any time, to two hours notice given on a Friday (69). These moves were designed to provide the worker with a greater degree of security of employment and a more regular income. Some form of guaranteed payment had been made during the war years, and the defects in the new provisions were not immediately apparent. It seemed for the moment as though Hitler had accomplished what George Hicks could not. 'Here, probably, is our biggest gain.' suggested Luke Fawcett. 'We have, for the first time in history, the guaranteed week.' (70)

Apprenticeship too became a matter for negotiation at national level, as the shortage of manpower for the industry, for repair

work and reconstruction became more pressing. Previously apprenticeship matters had been settled in the regions, often with individual employers. Now a national apprenticeship scheme was introduced as part of an attempt to increase the supply of skilled labour. The scheme was administered initially by a National Joint Apprenticeship Board, set up specifically for that purpose, and then taken over by the National Joint Council for the Building Industry (71). But it was merely a part of government plans for training in the industry, and, like the guaranteed week, the concession was made only in return for a breakdown in customary training arrangements. In this case the government insisted on an adult training scheme with the object of supplying 200,000 additional operatives to the industry, after completion of a six month course. The threat of dilution was met with mistrust by many building workers, but in the context of proposals for reconstruction, it was suggested that dilution, like pbr could be 'controlled' by the unions (72). Over-all the labour shortage had strengthened the relationship between government and unions, by bringing such issues to national level for negotiation. In this sense the building trade unions, and particularly the NFBTO had achieved a 'new eminence' (73). Conditions of service, as well as wages, were now firmly within their province.

The Federation's influence was extended geographically by the affiliation of a number of unions based in Scotland (74). Organisation in Scotland was highly developed, and since 1930, negotiations with the Scottish employers had operated through a Scottish NJCBI, outside the scope of the National Joint Council for England and Wales. It was the Scottish Regional Council, the largest region in the Federation, which represented the operatives within this body (75). Although, for the most

part, conditions in Scotland followed those in other regions, certain differences persisted, and since these favoured the Scottish operatives they were a disincentive for them to agree to a merger of the two agreements. The Grade A rate had successfully been extended to all operations in Scotland during the early part of the war, whilst the 44 hour week was everywhere maintained, with overtime operating at time and a half (76). Matters were complicated by the Uniformity Agreement, since the agreement in civil engineering, unlike the situation in building, applied both to England and to Scotland. But it was the attitude of the Scottish employers, reluctant to implement wage agreements recorded in England and Wales, and resistant to the payment of the guaranteed week, which did most to encourage the moves which were however unsuccessful towards the abolition of the Scottish National Joint Council in favour of unified negotiations. (77). The trend towards closer relations between the Scottish and English operatives was marked by applications for affiliation to the NJCBI from Scottish unions, particularly the Scottish Painters Society (SPS) and the Scottish National Operative Plasterers Protective and Benefit Federal Union (SNOFU). Some English unions were reluctant to see two sections of one craft represented within the NFBTO. The National Painters Society for example would have preferred to incorporate the Scottish Painters Society, than to permit their separate affiliation to the Federation (78). Yet their application was accepted, and, together with the merger of the Building and Monumental Workers Association of Scotland into the AUBTW in 1942, these developments gave to the Federation a new control of affairs in Scotland.

In Liverpool, where resistance to the national agreement had previously proved insurmountable, employers and operatives

were finally brought within its scope. Provisions made at the outbreak of war for the adjustment of wages on an exceptional basis, in response to the pressures of inflation, were not automatically applied in Liverpool (79). Matters were complicated by the affiliation of the Liverpool Association of Building Trades Employers to the NFBTE in 1942 (80). This meant that the operatives could only negotiate with the Liverpool Employers through the National Employers' Organisation, but the National Employers were precluded by the National Joint Council Agreement from negotiating through other than channels already established. The Liverpool operatives submitted their claim to arbitration. They were concerned to maintain the special rates which had in the past, given them parity with the 'super rate' which applied in London. And they demanded that they should be regarded as separate from the national machinery, with the right to negotiate under their own local agreement at least until 18 months after the end of war (81). On the first point they were successful, for their wages continued to be based on an addition to the National grade A rate, on the same lines as wages in London. But on the second point, the continuation of the local agreement, they were undermined by the determination of the Liverpool employers. The position in Liverpool was overtaken by the national machine and on 8 June 1945 it was agreed that the Liverpool and Birkenhead District should be brought within the scope of the national agreement (82). Their inclusion finally consolidated the position of the NFBTO, as the body through which all negotiations on behalf of operatives in England and Wales were conducted. And it brought into the Federation some of the best organised and most militant workers in the country.

The events of the second world war, like those between 1914-18

furthered the breakdown of customary arrangements within the building industry. As in the first world war, housebuilding reached a standstill, whilst employment on government contracts provided most of the work for building trades operatives. It was the intervention of government which pushed the industry towards the introduction of a payments system which was to prove irreversible. And in doing so it made changes which were more far-reaching than any experienced in the previous war. Not only was pbr confirmed as an acceptable form of payment for the industry. Not only was the demarcation between skilled and unskilled, building and civil engineering broken down. But the supremacy of the ASW within the Federation, the influence of the craftsman over the labourer, and of the Woodworker over other craftsmen, was called into question. The Federation remained the key body for negotiation at national level ~~of~~ *on* wages and conditions in the industry, and indeed the scope of negotiations widened to include a number of welfare issues which, previously would have been discussed only at local or regional level. Its influence was extended in Scotland, whilst Liverpool was brought within the national agreement for the first time. By the scope of its new affiliations, including the Association of Architects, Surveyors and Technical Assistants, the strength of the Federation had clearly grown. In the public recognition of its role within the industry it had reached a 'new eminence'. And yet the war-time changes, the erosion of craft practices and the technological innovations which characterised these years represented a turning point in the history of the NFBTO. It was to remain a powerful force for a much longer period, yet when Wolstencroft identified the plain time system of payment as 'the very principle upon which the organisation had been built' he had pinpointed the central feature of the Federation's organisation. The Federation was founded

and built on the principle of a national wage structure with one craft rate. The acknowledgement of pbr as an acceptable form of payment was a major break with past practice. For all of the conservatism which characterised the industry, craft principles were gradually modified, in the face of industrial, organisational and technological innovations. Henceforth the leaders of the Federation were involved in a defensive battle against the dynamic of this change.

### The Federation In Peace-Time

The health and welfare of the population had assumed a vital importance for government during the first world war, faced with a chronic shortage of labour. Similar problems recurred between 1939 and 1945. The fight against fascism depended, in considerable measure on the availability of a skilled and productive workforce, capable of turning out the machines and munitions which were essential to the successful prosecution of the war. The mobility of labour engendered by war-time production requirements, as well as the social policies of war-time government, for example on the evacuation of women and children from urban areas, lowered the constraints which normally governed contacts between different classes and engendered a new awareness of the problem of poverty (83). The experience of social conflict during and immediately after the first world war had impressed itself on commentators, and the government was aware of the need to avert similar upheavals at the end of the present round of hostilities.

From the turning point of 1941-2, with the invasion of the Soviet Union and the entry of the US into the war, attention was given to the problems of social reconstruction in the approaching

peace. Questions of housing, education, insurance against ill health, were matters of central concern and the return to peace seemed likely to impose new strains on the building industry. The Uthwatt, Scott and Barlow reports, as well as the Beveridge report directed attention to potential problems, in particular the shortage of land, labour and materials. By the end of 1944 the industry had reached a turning point. The main constructional work for war purposes was completed, and labour had been directed to other sectors of employment. Manpower in the industry was reduced to its smallest dimensions, 327,000 in 1944/5 (84). Social recovery impelled a redirection of resources into construction work and a reconsideration of traditional building processes. And with the return of a Labour Government in 1945, it seemed likely that central government involvement, fostered during the war, would be perpetuated.

The provision of housing was a central problem of the post-war era. The Government planned to provide accommodation by three methods: the repair of houses damaged by enemy action, the long-term building of permanent houses and the rapid construction of temporary dwellings to fill the gap until the longer-term programme could get underway (85). In London, Birmingham, and Glasgow, Plymouth, Coventry, Southampton and Bristol the blitz had left many families homeless, and the acute housing shortage constituted a real emergency (86). But no matter how great the problem of housing, the needs of industry could not be ignored. The development of new towns outside of the major conurbations could not provide an answer to pressing social problems if it was not accompanied by the construction of new factories and centres of employment. And the existence of such communities must be sustained by the provision of schools, shops and roadways, all of them demanding an intensive

input of building labour and materials (87). There were no easy solutions to such problems as the establishment of priorities and the synchronisation of the supply of labour and materials. A five year National Building and Civil Engineering Programme was developed by the Ministry of Works, in co-operation with other government departments (88). Financial provision for construction under the auspices of local authorities was made by the Housing (Financial and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act to subsidise building, both of houses and of flats. It was also intended to control the prices of materials by the Building Materials and Housing Act, which provided for the bulk purchase of materials and the limitation of rent and purchase price of houses (89).

The severe shortages, both of materials and labour, did much to undermine the Labour Government's building programme. In the first six years after the end of the war - from 1945-50, fewer than 850,000 new houses were completed, although it must be added that resources were being channelled, at least for the period immediately following the war, primarily into repair work (90). Shortages of timber and steel for building derived in part from the economic crisis of the post-war years, and in particular from the need to cut imports and increase exports. By 1951 the steel situation was critical. The rearmament programme created an additional demand for steel, whilst output was declining (91). Shortages of bricks and cement jeopardized the building programme, and workers were hit by the consequent dislocation of employment opportunities (92). Labour's housing programme was cut in the summer of 1947, when local authorities were instructed not to issue any further licences for building without the consent of the Regional Housing Officer, which was rarely given (93).

From its low point in 1943/4, the number of operatives in the industry rose rapidly, such that by 1948, it was not far short of the numbers employed in 1939 (94). The national apprenticeship scheme, and the government training projects were boosted by the return to the industry of class B releases from the forces - that is men whose trade was in short supply and who were, in consequence, allowed a speedy return to civilian life. Apprentices who had been in the last year of their training at the time they went into the forces, were allowed to return to their trade as fully fledged craftsmen. (95) The increase in numbers could not automatically guarantee the productive efficiency of the inter-war years. The demand for craft skills was high, and the building industry was in competition with other sectors which made use of the 'building' craftsman. Activity in shipbuilding for example was intensive during the later 40's, and although by 1946 some 9,000 joiners were employed in shipbuilding and shiprepair, additional joiners were urgently needed to meet the work on hand (96). The supply of skilled labour was reduced not only by war-time fatalities, but also by the movement of craftsmen into other industries, some of them never to return to their own trade. No amount of recruitment could compensate, in the short-term, for the loss of this experience, and it was generally agreed that productive efficiency had reached a low point unparalleled since the boom following the end of world war I.(97) It was the employers' response to the crises insupply of materials and skilled labour which governed the industry during the years of peace.

The first response of the employers to attempts by the Labour government to plan and control the industry was to ensure that restrictive arrangements governing tendering for contracts, as well as the supply of building materials and components were

operated to their own advantage. Building was not, for them, a social activity designed to respond to the pressing need for housing and industrial development. Rather, it was a speculative exercise intended to maintain and maximise the profits of investors who turned to the domestic market at a time when foreign investment was subject to statutory constraints (98). The increasing number of small employers and the concentrated power of the larger firms in the industry intensified the possibilities of competition for contracts and supplies. The organisation of price rings and cartels was designed to combat such competitive tendencies (99). Instead of tendering at the lowest possible price, a contractor might operate, with others, to maintain price levels, a move which had repercussions not only on the amount of work which could be undertaken, but also on the level of rents which would be charged for working class housing (100). It was a manoeuvre which was subject to investigation by the government and by the NFBTO between 1948 and 1950, but neither was able to overcome employer resistance to a building programme which relied on the initiative of local authorities to a greater extent than on private enterprise. House building had never been the most profitable of the activities undertaken by building contractors and, in a political climate which they regarded as unfavourable employers responded by collaborating to maintain profits (101).

The second of the devices used to overcome the shortage of labour and traditional materials - and again it was nothing new for the building industry - was the 'industrialisation' of building techniques. The application of labour saving processes is most likely to occur when labour is scarce and its price is high, and in the context of the shortage of skilled

labour in the post-war years, it is not surprising that employers turned not simply to the mechanisation of existing processes, such as had occurred in the thirties, but to the application of systems which relied to a much greater extent than previously on factory production. Just as the first world war hastened changes in techniques by the introduction of pre-fabricated units, new methods and materials, the second world war encouraged innovations in the construction process.

'Mechanical excavators and hoists; concrete raft for site; automatic lifts for shutters; concrete forced into moulds and vibrated; shutters removed after twenty four hours; no timber used; light steel frames; concrete carcasses; pre-cast steel shutters; pressed steel stairs; concrete roofs, pitched; asbestos concrete piping; steel window frames; metal picture rails and skirtings; composition cupboards; cork lino flooring on concrete; etc.' (102).

Economic and social considerations influenced design. D.E. Gibson, City Architect of Coventry, where extensive rebuilding was necessary following the blitz, stressed the potential advantages of pre-fabrication. It involved dry construction, and was less dependent on the weather. The roof could go on the building on the first working day, so that internal work could proceed under cover (103). The design of buildings was simplified to facilitate the use of semi-skilled labour and to reduce costs and the artistic content of craftsmanship was almost eliminated. The amount of brickwork in a building for example was reduced, as brick was used for straight forward cladding with very little feature or decorative work (104). Mechanisation was, inevitably a part of the changes which were

taking place. The introduction of tower cranes and special trolleys for stacking bricks provide just two examples. Yet it was the more extensive application of innovations in the building process breaking completely with traditional building methods which were most important in the 1940's and 50's (105). As in the twenties innovation was stimulated by engineering and aircraft manufacturers seeking alternative products and Messrs Vickers and Messrs Weir were amongst those who turned their attention to the manufacture of temporary housing using pre-fabricated techniques (106). The urgent need for housing could be satisfied, it seemed, by such methods. The promise of a speedy answer to the crisis in housing met with the approval of the Labour government and trade unionists, although some argued that workers were entitled to good quality permanent accommodation. Wimpey's 'No-fines' house was the response to such critics. It looked like a traditional terraced house on the outside, coated in pebble-dash, but it involved the application of industrial techniques, using a concrete pour process. Techniques of this kind promised an answer to the political problem of the mass provision of housing and were welcomed by Labour and the left (107) for this reason. That they were developed on the scale that they were, resulted more from the recognition by manufacturers of their potential for circumventing the need for traditional craft skills and building materials which were in short supply.

The third of the techniques utilised by manufacturers to overcome the restrictions imposed by post-war shortages involved the more widespread use of labour-only sub contracting, or 'lump' labour from the late 40's. This arrangement provides for the use of a sub-contractor who is not responsible for the provision of tools or equipment on the job, and who works for

a fixed payment, a 'lump' sum, made for a specified task. Arrangements differed between one sub-contractor and another, between one job and another (108). But it is clear that such a system, whatever the variations in the method of its operation, offered to the employer a number of advantages which were particularly important in the context of the post-war years. Firstly, LOSC provided for payment for the individual operative - or the gang if this was how the sub-contract was to be effected - to increase productivity and to finish more quickly wherever possible. In the context of site operations on which supervision could not be rigorously maintained, this factor was especially important to the contractor since it ensured that his labour was used to best advantage and that the job was speedily concluded. It has been argued that labour only is more successful than other incentive schemes, in encouraging efforts to greater output since its targets are simple, definite arrangements which enable the worker to assess the return which he can get for his additional efforts (109). Secondly, it provided for the 'employment' of operatives only as and when they were needed. Although casual employment was characteristic of the industry, it was still customary for workers to be recruited for a job in accordance with a general estimate of needs, rather than for a specified piece of work. Such employees now had rights to a guaranteed fall-back payment, to holiday entitlement and to welfare provision of some sort, if this could be negotiated, on site. LOSC served further to casualise an industry whose operations were already casual, since it enabled employers to recruit and pay men only at the point when a specific job had to be tackled. In doing so they could avoid the overhead payments which were attached to recruiting workers on a more regular basis. Thirdly, in the context of the prevailing shortage of materials, it was convenient for the contractor

to recruit labour at the point when it was particularly needed, and when materials were available, rather than to have men in their employment but be unable to proceed with a job because of a shortage of supplies. Under a negotiated incentive scheme workers might be inclined to cut output if resources seemed to be dwindling and unemployment was imminent, rather than completing the job quickly for whatever bonus might be operating. It has, additionally, been noted that some forms of IOSC share the advantages of specialist sub-contracting, in that a man or group of men with specialist experience or abilities might be recruited for a task which they could complete more rapidly and more effectively than other operatives. In any case men working together regularly, as they did under some forms of sub-contract, offered the employer the added bonus of the quality and efficiency which could be expected from their longer experience of working together (110).

Labour-only sub-contracting represented a challenge by private contractors to attempts by the Labour government to 'control' their activities. Once again Labour's programme made no challenge to the ownership or control of the industry through nationalisation. Fundamental to the policies which were operated was a system of controls which were intended to channel activity to the areas of greatest need. Three categories of building work were permitted; licensed - that is work undertaken by private enterprise; authorised - that is work for public bodies; and direct building for a building department. But the 'controls' of the Labour Government were unable to restrain the initiative of the speculative builder and to eliminate black market work. Valuable materials and labour found their way, unofficially on to the jobs which had attracted the interest of the speculative builder. Although the number of houses being built under

licence was only a fraction of the number being built for local authorities, the rate of completion in the private sector was much higher than in the public (111). This did not derive from the essential inefficiency of the public sector as Rosenberg has argued (112). Rather it is explained by the deliberate evasion of government controls by private contractors, to their own advantage and to the detriment of the public sector. The private builder relied on a rapid completion and sale in order to benefit from his capital outlay. The limited capitalisation of many small builders necessitated a quick turnover and once a project was begun they would aim for a speedy completion. When engaged in the public sector their motivation changed. Local authorities and other public bodies might make advance payments to private builders engaged in work on their behalf, so that the incentive to complete in order to obtain the return on capital was reduced. It was against this background that labour-only sub-contracting was used to ensure a steady supply of labour during a period of labour shortage, for earnings higher than the operative could expect if he was engaged in the public sector. In the context of labour shortage and political restraints the 'lump' was designed to attract the requisite number of operatives at the time when they were needed.

It was not the least of the advantages of LOSC to the employer that it operated to the detriment of trade union organisation and worker control, in the industry generally, and on each particular site where it was worked. Membership of the building trade unions peaked in 1947/8, and, with the high level of employment and the post-war demand for skilled labour, militancy in the industry threatened to reach new heights. Labour-only sub-contracting provided an ambiguous status for the sub-

contractor and his men. The large number of small firms which existed, and which still exist today, suggested the possibility of moving from the position of a worker employed by others to self-employed status; from being self-employed to an employer of others. If the sub-contractor was not required to provide materials or equipment in order to complete a job, then how much more easily might such social mobility be realised. The prospects of changing his situation might discourage a worker from taking up or maintaining trade union membership. But more important than such aspirations was the immediate impact of LOSC, divorcing the worker from the pay bargaining carried on on his behalf by his trade union, and the Federation. Rates would be negotiated individually, or for the gang in relation to each particular task, so that the bargaining carried on at national level by the NFBTO was of no relevance to the operative working on LOSC. Trade union membership would hold few benefits for the men who regularly worked on the 'lump' and site organisation would be more difficult to achieve with groups of workers settling their wages with the employer on an individual or a gang basis.

Trade union organisation might be expected to grow in a period of high demand for labour. Until the late 40's this was in fact the case (113). Not only was trade union membership increasing but site level militancy on wages questions pressurised the leadership of the NFBTO to move on the matter. Labour only sub-contracting was not yet widespread, and attention was concentrated on the Federation's negotiations. In April 1944 an application was submitted to the Employers' Federation for an increase of 3d an hour on the basic rate, and after protracted discussion agreement was reached providing for 1d per hour on Nov 1944 and 1d more on July 1st 1945. The building trade

labourers' rate was adjusted so that, from February 1945 it was 80% instead of 75% of the craftsman's rate (114). There had been a long-standing movement amongst the operatives for 3/- an hour for craftsmen with a corresponding increase for labourers and when the 1945 wage application was submitted for 2/6 an hour for craftsmen there was strong criticism of the Federation leaders from sections of the membership who felt that the claim was too low (115).

Many workers in London had been earning up to 5/- an hour under bonus systems, but earnings could not be maintained at this level, and some workers were down to the bare rate (116). Matters were exacerbated by the presence of many provincial workmen in the capital, employed on bomb damage repairwork under the EWO. The concentration of men in hostel accommodation, away from their families and living in inadequate conditions encouraged a lively dissatisfaction with the slow movements of the negotiating machinery on the wages question. Unofficial organisations were established in some of the London hostels, and the support for their activities was sufficiently strong to cause some consternation within the leadership of the Federation (117). The extent of support for the wages movement can be gauged by the demonstrations held in the autumn of 1945, attracting 59,000 building workers on October 8th and even more at the next event on November 5th (118). Deputations from the London Campaign Committee met the President and the Secretary of the Federation, whilst officials of the AUBTW and the Painters organised meetings of their members in London to explain the state of negotiations (119). Clearly some movement from the Federation's negotiators was expected, and at a time when the ending of war emergency provisions on pbr was in sight, the most likely direction was towards incentive payments.

The introduction of pbr during the war laid the basis for its more regular application within the industry in peace time. It was labour militancy on the wages question which ensured its acceptance. The election of a Labour government went some way towards smoothing over the ideological inhibitions of the craftsman regarding the question of incentives, for production could now be identified as part of the national effort towards social reconstruction, an integral part of Labour's programme. Just as the maximum exertion could be justified in the fight against fascism, so it could be vindicated as part of Labour's housing policy. The agreement which was reached at the end of 1945 stressed the importance of raising productivity and detailed steps were laid down to achieve this. A Joint Production Organisation was to be established at national level, to work through special regional or local Joint Committees to remove the causes for low output. It was agreed to examine pbr, but the employers were reminded that no steps could be taken in this direction unless previous policy decisions were rescinded (120).

It was not until 1947 that agreement was reached on the use of incentive payments in peace-time, for a trial period of two years. Application was made during that year for an increase of 6d an hour for craftsmen, with a corresponding increase for labourers. No agreement was reached and the matter was referred to the National Arbitration Tribunal for consideration.

The NAT found against the operatives, but, in the face of growing militancy, a meeting of the Joint Executives was held, and it was decided to press the claim with the employers, and, if unsuccessful, to raise the issues with the government (121).

In the meantime the National Joint Production Council had set up a sub-committee to examine the question of incentive payments. This body decided that a workable system of incentive payments

could be devised, and the question was referred to the NFBTE and to the NFBTO for consideration (122). At the annual conference of the NFBTO in 1947 strong dissatisfaction was expressed at the lack of progress on the wages question (123). But the operatives faced the threat of government incomes policy, as well as employer resistance to their claim. In this context proposals for incentive payments were put to a ballot, together with provision for an increase on the basic rate of 3d an hour. A significant majority in favour of the agreement rescinded previous decisions resisting pbr (124). The scheme of incentive payments was an experimental one, subject to review after two years. It provided for target and bonus rates to be set by the employer and agreed with the workers, at the beginning of a job, and barring material changes, no alteration was to take place during its course. Bonus earnings were expected to be around the 20% level, but no provision was made for a lieu rate where bonus was not applied. The sliding scale was to continue to operate with reviews reverting to a 12 month basis, but no alteration was to be made to the standard rate of wages before Feb 1st 1949 (125). Whilst the agreement met with majority support amongst the operatives, there were significant hesitations on the employers' side regarding its potential value. There was some feeling that it would operate against employers working primarily on repair or jobbing operations, and favour projects which were easier to bonus, for example new house building. It was recognised too that the success of the scheme would depend to a considerable extent on the supply of materials and the opportunity was taken to castigate the Government for past failures in this respect (126).

The ending of war-time provisions for the industry again called into question the relationship between building and civil

engineering. The Uniformity Agreement continued to operate throughout 1946, but by common agreement it was terminated on March 31 1947 (127). Pre-war practices, differentiating between the two were restored from this time, and building and civil engineering were again worked under separate agreements. The question of the two agreements was allied to that of pbr, since this was already more commonly operated within civil engineering, and its acceptance for building could facilitate the end of the 1934 demarcation agreement. Both questions were again under discussion during 1949 in view of the impending termination of the trial period of the Incentives Agreement (128).

It was difficult for the Operatives' Side to control the introduction and the application of payment by results. The employers were not obliged to introduce incentives, although if a scheme was introduced it was subject to the provisions of the working rule agreement (129). There was nothing in the agreement to compel the employers to make bonus payments and only a minority of firms actually did so. There was no schedule of bonus payments as there had been during wartime so that pbr was applied in a very haphazard and disorganised way. Agreements were reached at site level, and in consequence it was very difficult for the Federation and the unions at national level to monitor the way in which they were working. In many instances it seems that the payments which were made bore no relation to production. The speed appropriate for any one job could not easily be assessed since conditions were never the same from one site to another. The rank and file operatives were quick to take advantage of the lack of precedents and expertise on the management side (130). At the official level some concern was expressed at the absence of information and control through the established bargaining institutions (131).

The growth of informal bargaining arrangements at site level encouraged the development and extension of labour-only sub-contracting. The 'lump' was not of course unknown in the inter-war years in certain parts of the country (132). But from the late 1940's, at a time of shortages of labour and materials, that complaints about abuses associated with this form of sub-contracting increased in number. The men on site had no guidelines by which to work and the distinction between a bona fide incentives scheme and an arrangement for a 'lump' sum payment may sometimes have been unclear. The issue was raised on the NJCBI under the conciliation machinery, and was referred by the Council to the various Executive authorities. An informal conference with the NFBTE was held in December 1948 with a view to defining legitimate forms of sub-contracting. Representatives of the NFBTO were concerned to distinguish between incentive payments, which they had accepted, and the 'pernicious piece-work system' (133), which they did not. Despite assurances to the contrary:

'The position now under this new agreement is that sub-contracting for labour only has been let loose with a vengeance that has never been known in the building industry before, with all sorts of evil consequences,' (134).

Sub-contracting had always played its part, but the problem now was to establish the bona fides of the sub-contractors, and to prevent its escalation (135). The situation was the more complicated because of regional variations in contracting. In Scotland for example, main contractors were less common, and a job was still undertaken by a craft specialist who employed his own men - a system which contrasted with that used in South Wales, where a major contractor let work out to a sub-contractor

a practice which was also applied in the South and East of England (136). By 1951 an agreement was reached with the employers which was intended to safeguard the situation. The NFBTE gave public pronouncement to the view that labour-only was subject to abuses and that, provided bona fide sub-contracting was safeguarded, it should be under more effective control (137). In view of the difficulties of definition, and the autonomy of site organisation, even within many of the larger companies, the agreement cost them nothing. The spread of the 'lump' was by no means arrested.

Labour-only sub-contracting could not have taken a hold on the industry so rapidly if it did not hold advantages for the operative as well as the employer. The most telling was undoubtedly money. With labour in short supply at a time when building activities were booming, men could take home sums far in excess of those negotiated by the Federation, even if allowance was made for the prospect of a bonus payment of some kind (138). With work readily available, there was little risk of losing money by moving from site to site in search of greater rewards. The prospect of much greater returns was a considerable inducement. With independent status, the operative avoided the payments including tax which were obligatory on a statutory basis for employees and he would therefore be able to retain a greater proportion of his earnings for himself. In return of course, he lost the entitlements of holiday and insurance credits, but his immediate financial gains far outweighed such considerations. The other major attraction of labour-only, as opposed to the more conventional mode of employment was the relative freedom from supervision which it allowed to the operative. A worker on the 'lump', set his own pace in

accordance with his own financial considerations, and his work was less likely to be subject to the attentions of the site foreman in regard to output. In the words of the 'subby bricklayer' 'As a subby I have the feeling I am working with the general foreman rather than for him'. (139)

At a time when the high level of employment should have boosted union organisation in the industry, an increasingly defensive stance was assumed by activists in the face of the growing menace of the lump. After the two year trial period, the Incentives Agreement was confirmed in 1949 without further reference to the membership (140), and the 1951 amendments relating to labour-only did nothing to prevent the extension of this practice. Complaints at the growth of sub-contracting for labour-only were a regular feature of conference discussions during the 50's and it was argued that, by the constraints which were laid down on its operation in the amendments of 1951, the NFBTO negotiators had given de facto recognition to this practice (141). Conditions were particularly bad on some of the new town projects - where extensive building programmes were underway. In towns such as Basildon, Harlow, Crawley, Welwyn and Hatfield, organisation generally was at a low ebb, and no attention was paid to union agreements. 'Sub-contracting on a labour-only basis was rampant and was rapidly being introduced by almost all contractors engaged. The determining factor of competition and the economic environment surrounding incoming forms of good industry standing were such that this practice had to be adopted in order to compete successfully in the scramble for labour as there was little or no local resident building trade labour available.' (142) Plus rates and earnings were high and added inducements such as the prospect of obtaining good accommodation were provided (143). The

employers made no attempt to control their own members in such situations. Normal industrial discipline did not apply, and it was clear to all concerned that the sub-contractors involved were not recognised specialists (144).

Difficulties were especially likely to arise in relation to the obligations of the sub-contractor and the main contractor towards the operative on the 'lump'. The status of the operative was by no means clear. As a worker on site he could be employed on the same type of work, sometimes alongside, the worker who was more regularly recruited. Yet he was distinguished from the latter by his relationship to the sub-contractor, from whom he received payment for the work which he had undertaken. Sub-contractors, even where they appeared to be bona fide operators, often went bankrupt or decamped with the money which should have been paid out to the operatives. They might fail to stamp holiday or insurance cards, or to pay income tax which was due, and in all of these instances it was the operative who suffered. The informal manner in which labour was recruited for many jobs, and the casual basis, often through pub contacts, on which arrangements were made undermined any attempts which men might make to obtain their dues in such circumstances (145). Trade union organisers were negotiating from a position of weakness when they attempted to ensure that the main contractor took responsibility for any wages default of a sub-contractor whom he had engaged. Firms were obliged, in competing for the available labour, to offer work to labour only sub-contractors. As long as such men could operate with virtually no assets, it remained a constant possibility that their "cash-flow problem" would provide the imperative for some of them quietly to disappear with the takings. And it was not likely that the building contractors would volunteer to pick up the bill when

this happened.

The long-term unity of the federation, based on a uniform payment for all trades and all regions, was also undermined by the introduction of lieu payments which were granted more readily to some trades than to others. Where no incentive payment was made it became customary for employers on some jobs to offer a lieu bonus payment, a practice which was approved by the NFBTO in 1955 (146). It was the finishing trades who were penalised by this, for they were not in at the start of the job when the lieu payment was negotiated, and they frequently experienced difficulties when trying to ensure that it was applied for their work. As Coppock admitted 'the main contractor does in fact bribe the constructional trades in the early stages when organisation is developing, and sometimes there is nothing left in the kitty for those who come at the end' (147).

The effect seemed, at least to some of the painters who were affected, to be the reintroduction of the differential system of payment and a breakdown in the uniform rate which had long been Federation policy (148). Yet within the Federation the Painters lacked the influence to ensure either the abolition of lieu payments, or the implementation of all-trades consultation where such payments were negotiated in order to ensure their equitable application (149). The system of lieu payments was maintained and with it the distinction between crafts which the Federation had done so much to break down.

'Industrialisation' in the construction industry, combined with the effects of labour-only to weaken the standing of the NFBTO and its control over wage levels in the industry. The range

of new technologies has already been suggested. . . Many of the undertakings of the post-war era were of a scale to permit such innovations. Power stations, factories, bridges, oil refineries as well as house building on a massive scale provided scope and justification for capital investment. Taylor-Woodrow for example, a firm which had grown from a small enterprise in the twenties to one of the largest in Britain by 1950, was involved in a number of projects involving this new approach to construction. At Kirkby, in Liverpool, the first all-welded tubular steel frame factory to be fabricated completely on site (for Tubewrights Ltd), was completed in 1954. And in the same year the firm was commissioned by the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation at London Airport where it had already been employed on the central terminal area for work on the three story 'Queen's Building'. The Calder Hall Atomic Power Station, London Airport and the Festival of Britain buildings were operations on a similar scale, each involving new techniques and new problems (150).

The scale and style of such operations posed severe organisational problems for the craft trade unions. Not only did the size of the undertakings and the demand for labour impel the contractors towards the use of LOSC. They also undermined the customary distinction between craftsman and labourer, building and civil engineering. The ending of the Uniformity Agreement encouraged moves to unify the national agreements for building and civil engineering on a permanent basis. Failing this the leaders of the NFBTO decided to claim recognition from the Civil Engineering Employers to ensure that practices were no less favourable under the Civil Engineering than under the Building Agreement (151). The big employers such as McAlpines and Wimpeys who had a foot in both camps preferred to

use the Civil Engineering Agreement wherever possible, since it imposed no restrictions on overtime working (152). The civil engineer was encroaching on building activities and craftsmen were affected, to a greater degree than in earlier years by the Civil Engineering Agreement (153). Three seats on the Civil Engineering Construction Conciliation Board were eventually conceded to the craftsmen - one each for the ASW and the AUBTW and one for Coppock representing the Federation (154).

The definition of craft work was a continuing difficulty. The application of new machines and techniques attracted a plus rate on the labourer's basic rate under the civil engineering agreement in a way which defied the clear-cut distinction between skilled and un-skilled workers. The definition of the newer branches of the trade, such as shuttering which involved a considerable element of skill posed a dilemma for the craftsman. How far could craft boundaries and craft wages be said to apply? To what extent did involvement within the Civil Engineering Conciliation Board represent a reassertion of craft skills, and to what extent could it be understood as resulting from their dilution? As Coppock put it:

'On the problem of demarcation, what demarcation do we agree exists between ourselves, and who, when you appoint a demarcation committee is going to demarcate for you? When you were not members of the Civil Engineering Board, it may have been necessary to demarcate, but what are you going to demarcate this time? You sit on the Conciliation Board. You sit on the Builder's Board. We have to have the builders to assist us in deciding what is what.' (155)

The loss of jurisdictional ground in the battle between the two sectors continued to be a matter for concern. The options available were for a merger between the two agreements, such that there would be one agreement for the building and civil engineering industries, or a renewal of the demarcation agreement. The former was an impossibility for the craftsman, since, as it was succinctly put: 'the Civil Engineering Conciliation Board is in possession of the General Workers' Unions. They own it. We are only there on sufferance' (156). So in 1956/7 the latter course was adopted and a Demarcation Committee was set up.

The concern within the NFBTO regarding the boundaries of the building and civil engineering industries suggests a shift in the balance of power on the operatives side. Craftsmen had always been better and more effectively organised than their labourers, and this was true in the 1950's as it had been in the 1930's. But the distinction between the two categories of operative was blurred with the emergence of the semi-skilled grades who featured in the new processes of production of the 1940's and 50's. The encroachment of semi-skilled operatives on tasks which had, in the past, been performed by craftsmen was a disturbing feature of the industrial changes for leaders of the NFBTO (157). The application of the machine tool could not be confined to civil engineering. Nor could the breakdown of a craft operation into several distinct sections, each one undertaken by a semi-skilled worker be prevented. Yet in the context of such developments, officials of the individual craft unions, as well as the Federation, were concerned to assert the identity of the craft worker, the framework for negotiation for craft interests and the separate jurisdiction of the building and civil engineering agreements

(158). Representatives of the T&GM, organising in civil engineering could claim that mechanisation had made greater advance there than in any other industry in recent years. And it was clear that they intended to reap the benefit, not only by negotiating for an ever growing number of plus-rated jobs. Technical and engineering advances widened their scope for recruitment, without in any way overstepping the boundaries of the Perth Agreement. The balance of power would, in future, tilt in their direction.

By the 1950's the role of the NFBTO had been undermined in its area of central concern, the negotiation of wages for craftsmen in the building industry. And on related questions governing the conditions of employment of its members, there were some setbacks to the successes of the war years. In particular difficulties arose over the implementation of working rules 2A and 2B. Working rule 2A provided for the payments of a guaranteed weekly minimum of 32 hours in the event of time being lost through inclement weather. Working rule 2B laid down conditions for the termination of employment, which was to require two hours notice on either side, to expire at the normal finishing time on a Friday, after the first six working days of employment (159). Both measures were intended to decasualise employment practices, and to offer a more regular remuneration to the worker. Moral intentions in this direction were met with the response, amongst certain employers, of discharging their workers on the Friday following the onset of bad weather under rule 2B, and thereby depriving the operative of the payment which was due under rule 2a. Complaints about this manoeuvre - which was not actually in breach of working rules, were intermittently made during the 50's (160), but there was little success by the negotiators

for the NFBTO, in remedying this situation. The gains made during the war years, as part of the package presented to workers by the government and consolidated in the agreement at the conclusion of peace, had, in part been undermined. Employers utilised their right of dismissal under rule 2B to avoid other commitments to regular earnings.

In other areas, the extension of the National Joint Negotiating Machinery had proved more successful. The Holidays with Pay scheme, which applied jointly to the Building and Civil Engineering Industries was amended and improved. And within the NJCBI there was joint employer/operative control over all aspects of national apprenticeships (161). But perhaps the most important advance made during the 50's was the move towards the elimination of the lower graded areas and the establishment of a standard and uniform rate of payment throughout the country, with the exception of the 'super-grade' areas of London and Liverpool. In 1948 there were still 501 places on grade 3; 460 on grade 2; 335 on grade A1 and 727 on grade A - altogether 1,296 places throughout the country below grade A (162). The NFBTO was founded on the principle of a uniform rate and the elimination of regional differences. It had, from its inception, the object of raising the wages and conditions of the lower paid rural areas to the levels applying in the higher paid towns. Significant progress was made, in the post-war years, so that this target was achieved by 1960 and with the exceptions of London and Liverpool there was one uniform rate throughout the country (163).

This process was assisted by the increasing mobility of building labour engendered by the experience of war-time, and the post-war reconstruction. A precedent was set in the Uniformity

Agreement where men sent from a higher paid to a lower paid area received the higher rate. In civil engineering the top rate was applied throughout the country by 1951, but of course civil engineering contractors faced the difficulty of attracting men to projects in remote parts of the country, and civil engineering work was not, in any case, undertaken in every town, in the way that building obviously was. Civil engineering was more uniform in its demands for labour, for it was essentially large-scale and there was therefore less justification for the variation which applied on building operations (164). However the practice in civil engineering had repercussions in the building industry, particularly at a time when the distinction between the two was increasingly blurred. Delegates from the T&GWU, the union most strongly represented in civil engineering, were active within the NFBTO in pushing for the elimination of lower grades.

The rationalisation of the wage structure in the building industry was less of a success than might at first appear. The introduction of payment by results meant that the rates negotiated nationally by the Federation were of less significance for the man on the site than they had been hitherto. As the bonus scheme became more widely accepted, so the local rate became less relevant to take-home pay. There was, increasingly a gap between the national rate and local earnings, such that the elimination of the lower grades was of much less importance to an operative than the ability to negotiate a good bonus on the job. It is true that the national rate was important for the calculation of bonus, holiday payments and the guaranteed week. But as far as the earnings were concerned, it was site organisation and the bonus scheme which

were significant (165). It was an indication of the problems besetting the federation, that the achievement of one of its founding aims should have so little relevance for the building trades operative. During the inter-war years the negotiations of the NFBTO had been of considerable importance for the building trade worker, since, together with the movements of the sliding scale, they set the level for his earnings. But that time was now passed. As the discrepancy between rates and earnings widened so the activities of the NFBTO, and indeed its very existence, were undermined.

It was impossible for the NFBTO to resist the creation of new agreements affecting their members so the extension of public ownership under the Labour government changed the structure of collective bargaining in several areas. The nationalisation of the major supply industries encouraged industrial organisation and negotiation in areas where the building trades unions had members. With the establishment of the National Coal Board for example there was confirmed the central consideration of questions of wages and conditions in the coal industry. The creation of the British Electricity Authority centralised collective bargaining which previously had been controlled, on the employers' side, by the various electricity departments. Building trade workers were widely employed outside of the scope of the major agreement for the building industry, both on new works and on repair and maintenance. W.S. Hilton, Research Officer of the AUBTW estimated in 1953 that over 50,000 workers were employed in Direct Labour Organisations of local authorities alone. The creation of the National Health Service with its own bargaining structures, the confirmation of national collective bargaining with local authorities and within the nationalised railway system removed many building

trade operatives from situations which were directly comparable with the private sector. Conditions were, in other areas on the whole more favourable than those which applied in the building industry, if only because of the greater degree of job security associated with the public sector (166). Although the building industry agreement continued to be of central importance to the Federation and its affiliates it was impossible to argue - as had been argued in earlier years, that the one agreement should be applied to building craftsmen wherever they were employed.

In the private sector, in manufacturing industry too, there were moves to negotiate along company lines, to the detriment of established conditions for the building industry.

In some large firms which had initiated company agreements, building trades employees had resisted inclusion in conditions which were set for process workers. In Imperial Chemical Industries Ltd for example, wage rates were set in accordance with the building industry, although working conditions were negotiated together with the workers on production. In Courtaulds building workers resisted the agreement which was set for process workers. As building trade workers found employment on the permanent staffs of firms and public bodies, so the universal relevance of the building trades agreement was called into question. A fundamental difference existed between the building industry, where employment was casual and there was no guarantee of continuity of work, and employment in manufacturing, with a large corporation, where continuity of employment was more likely. It was, in this context, increasingly difficult to insist upon the application of the building

trade agreement. A new degree of flexibility was proposed and there was a shift from the long-held tenets of federation policy (167).

By 1960, when Dick Coppock's retirement was due, many of the Federation's targets had been realised. The abolition of grading schemes and the application of a uniform wage structure for the whole country, the implementation of a guaranteed week, an apprenticeship scheme and provision for holidays with pay were all accomplished facts. But they had been realised against the background of changes within the building industry which undermined them of some of their significance. The introduction of payment by results had led into the spread of labour only sub-contracting, a form of employment which threatened, not only the value of the Federation's negotiated wage rate, but trade union organisation itself. And its extension was accompanied by the application of new technologies, by the breakdown of traditional craft operations with the onset of 'industrialised' techniques and by the erosion of the value placed on craft skills. The impact of such changes was marked at the end of the period by a conference on the application of new technologies, called by the building trade unions who were suffering directly under their impact. And with this initiative came the renewed demand for structural change on the union side, for amalgamation to bring about the formation of one union for the building industry (168).

### Pt.3 Trade union structure in the building industry: 1940-60

The rapid war-time changes and the immense tasks of reconstruction encouraged renewed interest in the adaptation of trade union structure in Britain. The British trade union movement suffered less than that of other countries in Europe from the

oppression of fascism and the disruption of war. Although its leaders were drawn into the orbit of government, and many of its traditional practices relinquished, it sustained a degree of organisational continuity which was unrivalled. In Germany, France, Greece and elsewhere, trade unions, officials and many members had perished in the Nazi holocaust. Some European trade unionists had survived the war, in exile, in Britain, and their contact with their British counterparts, as well as the involvement of officials from trade unions in Britain in the re-establishment of the European movement, where they played a significant part, stimulated a renewed concern with the domestic questions of trade union structure.

The statutory provisions governing the process of merger were affected by the introduction in 1940 of the Societies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act. This provided for merger to be carried through on the basis of transfer of engagements, whereby members of one organisation agreed to transfer to another society on the basis of the existing rules of the society to which they transferred. In such a situation a ballot would be necessary only in the society whose members were transferring. The new arrangements gave recognition to the fact that mergers were, increasingly, effected by the take-over of a smaller society by a larger one on the basis of the existing rulebook of the larger union. And in such a situation members of the larger organisation would very often be slow to bestir themselves to vote. Under the 1917 legislation, fusion might be prevented by a low vote of the membership, but under the new arrangements 'it was possible to effect amalgamation in spite of apathy and indifference on the part of some members'. (169). Transfers still needed the approval of 2/3 of the members of

society unless the Chief Registrar of Friendly Societies dispensed with this requirement.

The legislative change encouraged renewed consideration of the question within the TUC. In 1943 a resolution was passed calling for an examination of trade union structure and closer unity (170). After surveying some thirty industries, the General Council issued a report in 1946, entitled Trade union structure and closer unity in which amalgamation was strongly recommended, and some suggestions were made as to the practical steps which could be taken in this direction. It was apparent that in the context of the long tradition of trade unionism in Britain, without the dislocations which had affected many of their European counterparts, dramatic changes could not be made. Insofar as the report was based on consultations with trade union leaders in the various industries, it reflected some of the problems impeding progress, not least the attitudes of trade union leaders themselves.

The renewed attention on the part of the government and the TUC to the shape and function of the modern trade union movement did not lead to changes after world war 2 on the scale of those which followed the armistice at the end of world war 1. The established solidity of British unions, the scale of their membership and operations, as well as the existence of formal bargaining machinery with the employers induced a resistance to all but the most limited mergers. It is true that the National Union of Mineworkers was founded, drawing together the regional Miners' Federations, which formerly had been linked via the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. And the Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Trades Workers was created through the merger of the National Union of Distributive and Allied

Workers with the Nat. Amalg. Union of Shop Assistants, Warehousemen & Clerks in 1947, but elsewhere trade unions continued to operate in accordance with the pattern which had been set in the early 20's. Little enthusiasm was shown for far reaching changes. The TUC accepted in its report, the opinions of the leaders of the building trade union leaders concerning the effectiveness of the Federation (171). It confined its recommendations to merger between cognate trade groups in four areas - the trowel trades; the woodworkers; plumbers, painters and glaziers; and the labourers. The ultimate goal might be one union for the building industry, but its advent was not to be hastened by any startling innovations.

Thus the numerous small craft societies in the building industry continued to operate under the weighty influence of the ASW. There was no shortage of resolutions at annual conferences of the Federation calling for one union for the building industry, mostly emanating from the Regional Councils of that body, rather than from individual union affiliates. But initiatives were alternately squashed or diverted according to their wording and the mood of the Federation's leadership. Proposals for the Federation to become a registered trade union, incorporating the various member unions, met, not surprisingly, with a fair degree of hostility from Wolstencroft. In the name of democracy and the rank and file he repudiated a proposal whereby 'those who had no money were prepared to take money from those who had it.' (172) More seriously, a motion calling for a more rapid progress on the question of amalgamation and a greater effort on the part of Executive Councils in pursuit of the one big union, made in 1944, also met with defeat. With the exception of Luke Fawcett and Harry Weaver of the AUBTW the

proposal was uniformly criticised. None of the unions represented at the annual conference were willing to sacrifice their autonomy in favour of a principle of unity which all claimed to support. Industrial unionism no longer had even a notional support from the delegates to the Federation. 'Unity' need mean no more than unity within the Federation, and a motion in favour of one union for the building industry, put forward in 1945 was defeated (173). More significantly, the following year, a resolution calling for 'an approach to amalgamation to be made through the cognate trades' was passed (174), but even this, limited path towards unity was to be abandoned by the early 1950's. Whilst pro-amalgamationists, mostly on the political left, and many of them in the Communist Party, continued to raise the matter, previous disappointments forced them to confine their initiatives to movements in favour of amalgamation of the cognate trades. Weary of the repetition of previous negotiations in this direction, and suspicious perhaps of the motivation of the pro-amalgamationists, Coppock insisted that the Federation had no rights to interfere with the domestic affairs of the constituent unions (175). Not even the more restrained objective of amalgamation on cognate trade lines could find support in the climate of the early fifties.

The last years of Coppock's reign were years of crisis for the Federation. Trade union membership had declined from its post-war peak in 1948, and the proportion of operatives who were in unions was declining. The opportunities for employment were high and yet the unions were failing to tap the potential which was clearly there.

Trade union membership and density in construction, 1951-1961.

1951 (GB)

Trade	Union membership	Workforce size	Density
Woodworkers	179,421	282,076	63.6%
Bricklayers/ Masons	79,545	171,568	46.4%
Painters <sup>1</sup>	81,908	247,033	33.2%
Plasterers <sup>2</sup>	20,174	38,203	52.8%
Plumbers	50,682	90,667	55.9%
Constr. Eng.	20,008	26,585	75.3%
Woodcutting Mach.	30,806	63,273	48.7%

1961 (GB)

Trade	Union membership	Workforce size	Density
Woodworkers	177,439	300,590	59.0%
Bricklayers/ Masons	(83,954) 73,954	192,170	38.5%
Painters <sup>1</sup>	71,981	335,850	21.4%
Plasterers <sup>2</sup>	16,890	47,340	35.7%
Plumbers	52,161	167,980	31.0%
Constr. Eng.	28,618	43,820	65.3%
Woodcutting Mach.	27,477	58,560	46.9%

1. Joint membership of ASP&D and the SES.

2. " " " NAOP and SNOFU.

3. It is assumed that 10,000 members of the AUBTW are labourers in 1961.

Apart from the painters whose membership had dropped alarmingly the fall was acute amongst the trades where the 'lump' was most common - that is amongst the bricklayers, the plasterers and the plumbers, with declines of 7.9%, 17.1% and 24.9%.

In the case of the plumbers and the construction engineers the decline was due to the increased size of the workforce rather than to a loss in membership. But for the bricklayers and plasterers the decline in density corresponded to a drop in the aggregate membership figures. Bricklayers worked in gangs and it was relatively easy to operate as part of a gang on a 'labour-only' basis. The subby-bricklayer's attitude to the union was not likely to be sweetened by the advantageous rates which he could expect on the 'lump'. 'To most practising bricklayers the union is a joke ... They (ie the unions) seem to refuse to believe that men are motivated by the cash nexus.'

(176)

But amongst carpenters, labour-only had taken less hold. Certainly there was less impact on trade union organisation and membership density continued to remain high proportional to other crafts in building. There was a downward trend in the density of union membership in other sectors of employment during the decade under consideration. The figures given by Bain and Price suggest a fall in aggregate union density from 45.0% in 1951 to 42.9% in 1961, a decline which is rather lower than that for woodworkers, although it must be allowed that the level of organisation amongst the woodworkers was higher at the outset than the average figure (177).

In any event it was apparent by the end of Coppock's terms of office that all was not well although the nature of the crisis and the scale of the problems had yet to be fully realised. By 1960 the problems confronting the building trade unions were sufficiently serious to direct attention again to the possibility of amalgamation. Although there were few substantial changes in inter-union relations in this period, the pattern of government

and organisation was, in every case shifting in response to industrial and political pressures. The consolidation of centralised collective bargaining, in conjunction with the renewed political involvement of the trade union leadership during the war and the post-war Labour Governments emphasised the importance of activity at Executive level. This was paralleled, in political terms, by the commitment to reformism and a hostility to left-wing and Communist activities. The impact of the cold war gave a new bite to such tendencies, which were manifest within the building trade unions, by a suspicion of movements from the rank and file. Conversely, the stress on pbr and the importance of site organisation boosted movements for the recognition of shop or site stewards within the rule-books of the different unions. Since their function now included the negotiation of site bonus, stewards had a new importance and their effectiveness could be measured not only by the degree of organisation, but by the level of take-home pay. Contradictions between the central and local officials were not readily resolved, but if they sometimes seemed to be vying for control of their own organisations it must also be remembered that they were together engaged in a defensive campaign, against the non-unionist, labour-only and the erosion of hard-won rights to organise.

### The Woodworkers

Membership of the ASW peaked in 1947 at 199,597 for the whole of the UK declining by 1960 to 180,741, a loss of 8,856 members. The number of carpenters and joiners in employment increased over the same period, according to the decennial censuses of 1951 and 1961 and the number of carpenters and joiners recorded as working on their own account rose over the same period.

There was a decline in the unions financial well-being too, although this was not immediately reflected in the value of the union's assets. These increased between 1947 and 1960, from £1,340,068 to £1,692,317, but there was a decline over the period in the surplus of income over expenditure. An important adjustment was made to the scope of recruitment which was opened up to 'allied process workers' in 1952. The scale of building operations after 1945 confirmed the belief that the innovations of the war years were not merely temporary. No longer was the ASW defined by the skilled work of its members since it now accepted other operatives, including women, who were engaged in woodworking processes. A special section was opened up for women members in 1952 but after so many years of keeping women out the union was not flooded with applications. It has been suggested that the union's recruitment was little affected by this adjustment to rules since branch officials tended to take in members in accordance with established practices (178). The building industry was still of primary concern to the ASW and it was in response to developments in this sector that changes were initiated.

The tension between rank and file initiative and the central Executive Council was well illustrated through the establishment of the annual delegate conference of the union. The General Council was, until the end of the second world war, the effective policy making body of the Society. The need for a national representative conference had long been a campaigning point with the left of the union, and in the context of the militancy on wages during 1944-5, and at a time when building workers, concentrated in London hostels, were developing unofficial movements, the campaign snowballed (179). When the General Council met, in October 1945, it was faced with

resolutions from 361 branches of the union to make provision for an annual delegate conference (180). The argument for a conference was accepted by the General Council (181) and the first one was held in 1947 on the basis of one representative per thousand members sent from branch groupings on an area basis.

Three problems highlighted the battle for control of the union machinery in the organisation and status of conference. The first related to the running of the event, since it was decided by the Executive that 'it shall not be in order for delegates or groups of delegates to hold sectional meetings for the purpose of discussing the business of the conference, or to decide the attitude to be adopted to any matter placed before conference for consideration or decision. Any delegates adjudged guilty of such conduct shall be suspended from any further sittings of Conference, and may in addition be dealt with by the EC.'

This clause, which gave rise to friction at the outset of the very first conference, was a clear expression of the fears which had prevailed in the thirties amongst the unions leadership, that the left, with their paper, the New Builders Leader and a well organised political machine, would use the facilities of conference to expand its influence, and eventually, to control proceedings. The Communist Party, it was complained, behaved undemocratically, acting as a group within the union, and holding faction meetings to decide policy (182). Whilst 'heresy hunting' was denied by the EC, their manoeuvre was clearly devised to deal with Communists, but could extend to any grouping which took initiatives independently of the union's leadership. Although the clause was not endorsed by conference

for inclusion in standing orders, the Chairman reminded delegates that provision existed within the Rulebook for dealing with members who behaved in an unauthorised fashion. Clearly the discussion on factions was only a foretaste of the conflict which might be expected from these contacts between Executive and General Council members, and rank and file delegates (183).

The second of the issues to be hotly debated was the question of a Standing Orders Committee for Conference arrangements. The business of the first conference was regulated by the Executive Council, and this could be changed only by decision of the GC at the sexennial meeting for rules revision due in 1951. The manner in which affairs were conducted was subject to strong criticism, since the EC's decisions often appeared to be arbitrary and to rule out discussion on issues which were of concern to delegates (184). Resolutions calling for the election of a Standing Orders Committee were repeatedly submitted, and when one of them was allowed to remain on the agenda, at the third annual conference, it was successfully passed with only brief discussion. When the General Council next met, in 1951, it recommended the establishment of a Standing Orders Committee of five members, two from the EC and three to be elected from Conference. Henceforth the conduct of business was removed from the direct control of the Executive, with greater leeway for the expression of opinion from the body of the membership. The influence of the EC within subsequent conferences should not be under-estimated as a consequence of this decision. Conference presented them with ample opportunity to state their opinion on matters under discussion. Yet the move to allow for greater delegate involvement in the running of the conference was a significant move forward in the democratisation of procedure within the

union. The establishment of a forum in which issues could be debated gave new expression to rank and file opinion which was confirmed through provision for delegate representation on the Standing Orders Committee.

Finally the status of the conference was an important clue to the extent of membership participation in the process of decision-taking. When the Conference was first introduced, in 1947, it had only advisory powers, and policy making rested with the General Council. This created an anomaly whereby a resolution passed at annual conference would still require ratification by the General Council before becoming union policy. Yet any branch of the union could submit resolutions to General Council, which would have the same status, when considered, as resolutions passed by the annual conference. By 1950 change was imminent. The situation was naturally unpopular with conference delegates, and the adjustment in union rules was not opposed by the General Secretary or the Executive Council. When the General Council met in 1951, it was to consider the numerous resolutions calling for annual conference to be given policy making status in the union, a situation whereby the GC was required to vote itself out of existence, insofar as its policy making functions were concerned. This it did, by a narrow majority of five to four (185). Yet the EC and the GC had not fully relinquished their grip on the right to control policy. The new powers of conference were qualified by the proviso that all decisions should be examined by a newly formed Joint Committee of the EC and the GC, and that when matters of 'major importance' arose, they should be referred to the membership for a ballot (186). It has been argued that the device of the Joint Council was introduced as

a means of retaining some control over conference decisions (187). The reluctance of the ASW leaders to abandon their authority to conference delegates was met by a further shift in authority from the GC to the EC. Previously it was the GC which in theory at least, was responsible for making policy. Now members of the EC were jointly involved in a committee which allowed them a central influence over the implementation of conference decisions. The issue reflected once again the tensions between the union's leadership and the broader layers of the membership, tensions which were becoming more pronounced in the context of post-war adjustments in the industry.

The other aspect of union government which was broached in this period was the relationship between the Management Committee and the central bodies of the Society. The first annual delegate conference remitted to the EC the task of preparing and submitting to the General Council a plan whereby the district structure should be revised. A new scheme should be devised to be financed nationally and given an organisational base at regional level with the object of providing an equal service to members in every part of the country. Management Committee functions had been largely usurped it was suggested by the establishment of Federal bodies which negotiated on behalf of woodworkers in various sectors, the NFBTO, the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions and the National Federation of Furniture Trades Unions (188). Some Management Committees in the well-organised and geographically compact urban areas were often able, through the payment of levies, to maintain organisers to assist with their work. By contrast other MC's, whilst having a substantial membership, found that they were spread over such a wide area that levies to maintain an ade-

quate organising service would be intolerably high. The EC used this inequitable distribution of resources as a justification for their proposals to revise the union's structure. Yet their real motivation derived from the fact that it was the well-organised urban areas which most often came into conflict with the EC on policy issues. It was cities such as London and Liverpool, Manchester or Glasgow which retained a degree of autonomy in the conduct of their affairs. National organisers found that their work was in the less well organised parts of the country, and their presence would not have been welcomed in the larger towns. Proposals made for the purpose of establishing regional organisation within the context of a national scheme to provide a uniform service to members ran head-on into conflict with Management Committees in the larger towns and cities. The scheme was not intended to undermine MC's as such. The relationship of the leadership to the MC depended to a considerable extent on the location of that MC. Consequently it was the rural areas which stood to benefit from the proposals, whilst in more concentrated centres of membership the scheme aroused little enthusiasm.

Detailed proposals were drawn up whereby the EC might be empowered to take over District Offices and funds, to divide the country into regions, in each of which a regional secretary might be appointed, and to make provision on standard conditions of service for the employment of organisers (189). The plans were unpopular amongst the members and were unlikely to attract the requisite support at the annual delegate conference. The question of organisational services was referred to the Joint Committee and more limited proposals were brought forward (190). Approval was given, at the 1953 conference to projects for organisational reform, and as a consequence

Management Committees in some areas were merged, whilst in others, District Committees were set up for the first time (191). This was in effect a tidying up operation. The EC recognised that the main obstacle to further progress was the matter of finance. The funds which had accumulated in the wealthier districts gave the members there a degree of independence in their organisation and activities, and it was the question of financial responsibility which particularly interested the leadership. For this reason attempts were made to curtail the independent status of the Management Committees and to introduce the regional structure which would be more amenable to central control. Yet the organisational base and the influence of the MC's was by no means sufficiently eroded to allow progress in this direction. If anything, it seems likely that the role of the Districts would have been boosted during these years. The impact of pbr, and the responsibility for negotiation at site and local level over incentive schemes, together with regional variations in its method of application suggested a new status for site stewards and local representatives, which could well have enhanced rather than undermined the old Management Committees. Whether or not this was the case there was little indication, from this layer of activists, of a willingness to accept an extension of central power and control. Regionalisation was still some way off, but the proposals, and the failure to implement them, are a further illustration of the growing gap between the central body of officials and sections of the active membership.

Amalgamation was no more than an abstract question for members of the ASW during this period. Proposals for one big union at annual conferences of the Federation received little support from ASW delegates (192). There was a general reluctance to

go over well-trodden ground and discussions were, in practice, confined to negotiations with much smaller societies with membership in the cognate trades. Discussions took place with the National Union of Packing Case Makers (NUPCM), a union which dated its existence from the latter half of the nineteenth century. With membership of some 5,200, distributed over 46<sup>+</sup> branches, and total assets of £29,556, it represented an interesting proposition for the ASW. Indeed it seems likely that it was the prospect of swallowing the smaller society, first mooted around 1950, which encouraged the adoption by the ASW of a more open recruitment policy, including women workers, from 1952. The NUPCM had about 500 women in membership and provision had to be made for them if the merger proposals were to bear fruit. Notwithstanding the adjustments in ASW recruitment, the NUPCM was not easily seduced. Although the Executive was sympathetic to the merger, Sam Reading, the energetic young AGS was not. He looked forward to becoming GS in 1952 and he had no intention of renouncing this position in favour of amalgamation with the ASW. A transfer of engagements required two thirds of the members to vote for a merger. It was unlikely as Sam Reading pointed out to his Executive, that this stipulation could be fulfilled without his support. Negotiations between the two unions were, for the time being, abandoned. (193).

In other avenues of discussion, there was little success to report. New approaches were made to the Woodcutting Machinists, but their General Secretary declined to enter into negotiations without a ballot vote of their members (194). There was little scope for the advancement of mergers in a context where each of the woodworking unions had a regular and established

field of recruitment. And there was little enthusiasm on the part of ASU leaders for moving outside of that sphere of influence and broadening the areas from which their members were drawn.

### The trowel trades

Aggregate membership and financial assets of the AUBTW increased between 1940 and 1960. In 1940 the union claimed 66,592 members, but twenty years later, after two smaller organisations had agreed to merger, it had expanded to 84,986 (195). Assets had risen too from nearly £175,000 to over £500,000 (196). As in other unions membership rose most rapidly during the years following the war and declined thereafter. But account must be taken, in assessing trends in membership, of the impact of the two mergers, with the B&MNAS in 1942 and with the NBL&CWS in 1952. The transfer of engagements of the B&MNAS added over 5,000 members, but numbers declined slightly until 1944, rising thereafter to a peak of 88,566 in 1947. There was then a steady decline until 1952, when the NBL&CWS added a further 12,345 bringing the AUBTW's membership to a total of 93,362 in 1952. But it was clear that this level of membership could not be sustained. Numbers fell consistently from the mid-50's. Between 1953, when membership reached its peak, and 1960 there was a loss of over 10,000 members - approximately 11% of the 1953 membership.

The situation was the more serious when the union's membership was assessed as a proportion of its potential members. According to the 1951 Census of Population, there were 148,604 bricklayers and 22,965 masons in employment in that year - a total of 171,568, against a trade union membership of 79,545, that is a density of 46.3%. By 1960 there was a clear deterioration, for not only had the number of union members fallen during that

period, but the number of bricklayers and masons in employment had increased substantially to 192,170. Union membership had risen as a result of the merger with the NBL&CWS, but if a labourers' membership of 10,000 is excluded it is clear that over-all density amongst craft members had fallen to roughly 38.5% (197). The decline in density might not have been so worrying had it not been accompanied by a steep decline in aggregate membership associated with the growth of lump labour. Trade union leaders might be more inclined to concern themselves with membership and finance than with density and may even welcome a decline in density deriving from an increase in employment opportunities where membership figures are stable and it is likely in the future that aggregate membership will grow to match employment. This was not the case for the AUBTW during the 50's, since the improvement in employment opportunities was actually matched by a decline in aggregate union membership - a serious problem for the long-term stability of the organisation. As employment opportunities expanded, as skilled labour was in short-supply so it seemed the 'lump' was growing to the detriment of trade union organisation.

Financial losses accompanied the union's membership problems. Although the mergers boosted the financial assets of the AUBTW they could not resolve a longer-term problem resulting from the fact that contributions had not kept pace with the increased cost of living. The lowest rate of contributions in 1921, made for trade benefits only was at 9d per week, with the highest level of contributions set at 1/8d for trade, sickness, superannuation and funeral benefit (198). The level of contributions was adjusted only slightly during the inter-war years and in 1946 a partial alteration of rules was agreed in order to raise contributions. Even so the amounts were only

1/- per week at the lowest rate and 1/11d per week at the highest (199). A financial crisis was threatened because of low contributions in the mid-50's and the Executive launched a campaign with the objective, not merely of resolving the immediate financial problems, but also of removing the need to ballot the members when an adjustment to contributions was deemed to be necessary. The principle which was adopted was that of the sliding scale, with contributions to be adjusted in relation to increases in wage rates. A vigorous campaign was conducted by the union's national officers and in 1956 a national ballot gave membership approval for the new method of adjusting contributions (200). The measure was justified by reference to the union's financial problems as a necessary expedient to stabilise income yet it removed an important area of union government from membership control.

Amalgamations provided the major means of shoring up the union's increasingly shaky position. Merger with the B&MNAS had been an objective for George Hicks for many years. But it was not to be achieved during his period in office. From 1940 his Parliamentary activities removed him from direct involvement with the union and his place was taken by Luke Fawcett, previously the union's full-time President (281). It was Fawcett who finalised the arrangements for the transfer of engagements of the B&MNAS into the AUBTW. The B&MNAS was based mostly amongst masons in Scotland. Masonry work had remained more common there than in England during the inter-war years, but the union's membership, previously fairly steady, declined in the early years of the war (202). Masonry work was increasingly costly and there was a tendency for local authorities to impose limitations on the use of stonework, to the detriment of the mason's employment prospects (203). The

merger was carried out in accordance with the Act of 1940 as a transfer of engagements, and no vote was required to confirm the merger within the larger union. Provision was made for the GS and the two full-time officials, all of whom operated within Scotland to be taken onto the staff of the AUBTW (204). The merger added over 5,000 members and some £18,000 to the assets of the AUBTW. But most important it confirmed the position of that union within Scotland as the union for the trowel trades.

It was the second merger, with the NBL&CWS which had the greater impact on the structure of the AUBTW. The problems of the latter union were already apparent by 1951. Membership was declining and finances were suffering such that an annual surplus of £20,000 had been turned into a net loss, even after allowance was made for interest on investments (205). Whatever its past ideological claims, the AUBTW had confined recruitment to skilled workers. But the new GS, George Lowthian, who replaced Luke Fawcett on his retirement in 1951 crossed the barriers between skilled and unskilled as a means of shoring up his ailing membership. It is difficult to estimate the gains which were made but it has been claimed elsewhere that the NBL&CWS brought an additional 17,142 members into the AUBTW (206). It seems unlikely that the real figure was as high as this, for the last return made by the NBL&CWS to the Registrar of Friendly Societies was rather lower - some 12,345 members were claimed in 1951. Sustaining union membership amongst builders' labourers had never been an easy task. George Lowthian has subsequently suggested that they were as much of a handicap as they were an asset, since the numbers were lower than was anticipated, whilst turnover was high.

No attempt was made within the AUBTW to gauge the feelings of

members on this breach of their past craft orientation, since the merger was effected by a transfer of engagements which did not require their approval. Clearly the move had majority support within the NBL&CWS where previous proposals concerning amalgamation into the large, general unions had not been approved (207). It is not easy however to establish the response amongst craftsmen in bricklaying and masonry. Certainly branch officials, like their counterparts at Divisional and Executive level, were confronting the problems of declining membership. In areas such as Coventry and Birmingham, where building activity was very high in the post-war years, a crisis in organisation was reported, with a loss of members and a 'general apathy of our members towards Branch life and organisation.' (208). In many branches George Lowthian claimed, there was an enthusiasm concerning the recruitment of labourers. But in view of the predictable difficulty in sustaining the labourers' membership, there is little practical evidence that this was the case. It would be surprising if the craft elitism characteristic of the bricklayers as well as other tradesmen, had entirely disappeared, although it is possible that the events of war and the innovations of the post-war years had encouraged a different attitude amongst the younger members. In any event the more 'open' pattern of recruitment, with the concomitant changes in the structure of the AUBTW were instituted regardless of approval or opposition from the members of that union.

It was the first time, amongst the building trade unions, that a craft union openly set out to recruit amongst unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the industry. In addition to bricklayers and masons the AUBTW had members amongst terrazzo workers, mason machinists, composition floor layers and wall and

floor tilers. From 1952 it catered in addition for labourers, steel benders and fixers, scaffolders and similar occupations. A new section was added to the eight already in existence to cater for the unskilled and semi-skilled members. Contributions were made at the rate of 8d per week, with an additional 6d to cover sickness benefit if required. Under the terms of the 1938 rulebook, the election of District Cttees and Divisional Councils were so arranged as to provide for the representation of the two major crafts within the union, and this principle was now extended to include the labourers. It was also decided that it should apply to the EC as well as to District and Divisional bodies. Two representatives of the NBL&CWS were appointed to sit on the EC after the merger for a period of three years. Thereafter labourers' representatives were nominated by the labourers' section, but elected to the EC by the votes of the whole of the union's membership (210). These changes provided a structure which could absorb the new class of members. But their impact was felt more widely.

Not least important of the repercussions of this merger was its impact on inter-union relations. The general unions had been admitted into the NFBTO on the basis of the Perth Agreement, and leaders of the craft unions had assiduously maintained their sole rights to recruit craftsmen. The situation was changed by the decision of the AUBTW's EC to accept labourers into membership, for they were now trespassing on the time-honoured preserves of the general unions. This was all the more important in view of the impact of new technologies which tended to facilitate the use of semi-skilled workers within the industry. The merger of the NBL&CWS into the AUBTW cut across existing barriers which kept the T&GW outside of craft enrollment. But as craft definitions were, in any case, being undermined by the

process of industrial change, T&G officials were able to point to the activities of the AURTW with the unskilled and semi-skilled workers, and justify their own innovations in recruitment practice on this basis.

### Painters

For the painters too the post-war years saw an impending crisis in membership and income. Membership rose until 1947 when it stood at 69,369, but declined thereafter, sinking to 59,770 by 1960. The union's assets rose over the same period, from £310,208.7.2d in 1949 to £367,859.4.10d, but for some of the time it was necessary to draw on reserves in order to meet current expenditure (211). As with the ASW and the AUBTW, officials of the National Society of Painters endeavoured to centralise control over the financial aspects of the union's affairs and to concentrate trade union membership amongst painters within their own society through the absorption of smaller organisations in the same trade.

The first moves towards centralisation came about in 1943 when a full-time Executive Council was established with powers to liaise with District Committees and branches and to provide for closer contact with the union's organisers (212). The five members were nominated within each Division but elected by the membership as a whole (as in the ASW) and were subject to re-election after five years (213). The authority of the new EC was challenged shortly after its election by the London District Committee, over the question of payment systems. A number of painters in London were engaged on pontoon building which was regarded as outside of the scope of the building industry, and they were accepting bonus payments. The ASW had accepted this and had negotiated an agreement on behalf of their own members

on the same job, but this the London DC of the Painters refused to do. The EC ruled that the union's long-standing resistance to payment by results should not apply in this instance and insisted that the LDC should reach an agreement no less favourable than that obtained by the ASW. It was only through the mediation of members of the General Council that the conflict could be resolved. The London DC was suspended from office but the suspension was removed by the GC who insisted that the London Committee make contact with the London Master Builders' Association and negotiate in accordance with instructions from the Executive. In the face of such support for the EC's position the LDC backed down and agreed to carry out the decisions of the General Council (214). The authority of the new EC had been vindicated but only through the support of their own GC. The co-operation and collaboration between EC and GC within the ASW has been suggested elsewhere (215), and it seems that, within the NSP the same forces were at work, upholding central authority against initiatives from the districts, and supporting the tendency to concentrate power within the union in the hands of full-time officers. The introduction of a full-time Executive was paralleled by an increase in the number of full-time organisers, covering almost the entire country. Between 1933 and 1955 the number of full-timers at District level in addition to the EC, rose from 29 to 44, an increase which imposed an added financial burden on the society's members (216).

Attempts to consolidate the national scope of the union through the incorporation of smaller societies of painters were not immediately successful. In the early months of 1948 amalgamation with the Scottish Painters Society was under discussion, with key issues in the negotiations being the position of full-time officials in the event of amalgamation. But the NSP, unlike

the AUBTW, was unable to confirm its position north of the border, and was obliged to look to internal solutions to the problems of declining membership and income by the 1950's (217). Sectional members, that is those paying the highest contributions, had not had an increase in contributions for over 20 years, whilst for other sections the increase had been a mere 1d a week, whilst wages had more than doubled over the same period. Membership had declined by the mid-50's so attention to the union's income was a matter of priority for the leaders - GC as well as EC and the GS (218). But the painters like the bricklayers and masons, failed to respond in sufficient numbers to permit a rule change in respect of contributions. In 1955 when the matter was put to the membership, voting was 10,585 in favour of the increase and 7,709 against. The failure to achieve a sufficient majority forced the EC to resort to more extreme measures in order to ensure that the rule-change, regarded as essential, could be carried through. The EC summoned the General Council, who gave them authority to declare a state of extreme emergency, with the suspension of rules to allow a further vote on the question of increased contributions to be taken (219). As in the AUBTW in the same period, leading officials were prominent in the campaign to ensure that contributions were raised, and their efforts were rewarded when, on a rather lower over-all vote, there was a much larger majority in favour of the increased subscription (220). Although there was nothing like the provision, made by the leaders of the AUBTW for an automatic adjustment of contributions, it was clear that the EC of the Painters, like their counterparts in other unions, were allowed considerable leeway in making adjustments in this area. If the final decision rested with the members, the EC had the means, through its publications and visits to branches and area meetings, to ensure that membership opinion

was swayed in the direction which the EC approved. And if the result was not satisfactory at first attempt, then a second ballot could be held to ensure that the appropriate response was recorded.

#### The Federation: 1940-60

In 1940 the NFBTO was at the height of its influence. Not only did it negotiate on behalf of the building trades unions with employers, but its leaders were consulted and courted by government ministers. The Federation was representative of the craft interest, which predominated within its membership, and it was the Woodworkers who dominated the craft unions, both by the size of their organisation, and by the influence which accrued from their status within the craft hierarchy. Within all of the major decision taking bodies of the NFBTO, it was the ASW who influenced events. On the Federation's Executive and General Councils, as well as within the Joint Executives, a body which was not, strictly speaking a part of the Federation's structure, the ASW was the most influential organisation. Paradoxically the supremacy of the woodworkers was jeopardized when the Federation's influence was at its peak. Government intervention in favour of payment by results was successful only because Bevin utilised the existing differences of views within the building unions and played off the smaller societies against the ASW. But, with the confirmation of pbr as an acceptable form of payment and with the return to peacetime conditions, the role of the ASW within the Federation was reaffirmed.

By the late 1950's Dick Coppock's retirement was imminent.

A powerful personality and an astute negotiator, he had domi-

nated the Federation for nearly 41 years. Together with Alexander White of the NFBTE he was an architect of the joint negotiating machinery within the industry, and his personal influence, both with employers and trade unionists, was unrivalled amongst building union officials (221). But Coppock owed his influence as much to the procedure whereby he was elected, as he did to force of character. For Coppock was elected in the first instance by ballot of the Federation's membership, comprising all of the affiliated unions (222). As a representative of all of the members of all of the unions he therefore had a standing greater than that of any individual union leader. Rather as the General Secretary of the T&GW stood above that union's lay Executive, or appointed full-time officials, so Coppock, within the Federation, in this respect, outranked any of the General Secretaries of the Federation's affiliated. It is true that the position of Secretary within the NFBTO, since it carried with it the responsibility of sustaining the co-operation of the individual unions, necessitated government through accommodation. Moreover Coppock's position in relation to the broader spectrum of the trade union movement was weakened by the fact that he was unable to gain a place within the TUC's General Council. Yet the length of his tenure of office, together with his ability to manipulate men and events, served to strengthen the office of General Secretary and ensured that Coppock was 'a power within the Federation'. (223).

It was the leadership of the ASW which curtailed the independence of the Federation's General Secretary. Wolstencroft was a powerful figure within the NFBTO during his period as GS of the ASW. He was President for many years, but resigned in protest against the government's imposition of pbr in 1941. He

remained as GS of the Woodworkers Society until 1947 when he was replaced by J.F. McDermott, a less forceful character who held office for the next twelve years. It was McDermott's successor, George Smith, who initiated the changes which defined the election and status of the new GS within the Federation. Smith was a forceful personality, a former Communist who emanated from Scotland, and who had played little part within the Federation before becoming GS of the ASW in 1958. It was apparent that the position of GS within the Federation was the only one which could rival his own, although the Federation GS was in fact 'a chief with no Indians'. Smith moved quickly to ensure that in future the position should be defined in administrative terms, and that the new GS should not be allowed the influence which had accrued to Coppock during his decades in office. When amendments to rule were put forward at the Federation's annual conference in 1959 he proposed on behalf of the ASW that the position of GS be an appointed one, the appointment to be made by the Federation's General Council, and ratified subsequently by annual conference. Other union leaders were not reluctant to accept a measure which promised to confirm their own influence, through the Federation's Executive, at the expense of its chief officer. The motion was passed on a card vote (224). When Coppock finally retired in 1961 his replacement was nominated according to the new rule. Harry Job Owen Weaver, the new incumbent was a bricklayer by trade. His father and grandfather before him had been bricklayers and Harry had been a staunch trade unionist from his youth. He had joined the Communist Party in the early 30's and together with Harry Adams, a childhood friend, and his own brother-in-law, Jo Roots, had been active in support for the NBJ. He had followed Harry Adams up through the AUBTW and was President of that union at the time when he was nominated for the leading position within the IFBTO.

Like many officials in the building trade unions he abandoned his Communist affiliations and was a Labour Party member at the time when he was elected GS of the Federation. Harry Weaver had far less room for manoeuvre than had been the case during Coppock's period in office. The ballot for the position of Secretary of the Federation was abandoned in the name of administrative efficiency, with the practical consequence that Smith's position was strengthened, both as GS of the ASW and within the ranks of the Federation.

A feature common to all of the building trades unions in the period was the development of shop steward organisation, paralleled in the case of the Federation, by an increase in the number and responsibilities of the Federation stewards. The introduction of incentives opened up a new and important area of operations for shop stewards, who took on the responsibility of negotiations at site level for this vital component of take home pay. And at the end of the war, when the operation of incentive schemes was called into question, it was the existence of stewards amongst the members congregated in London, which did so much to promote the unofficial movement which flourished, for a brief period, bringing pressure to bear on government and trade union officials alike (225). Increased attention was paid by some full-time officials to the role and functions of stewards (226) since it was apparent that site organisation depended in a large measure on their existence and effectiveness (227). In view of the loss of members during the early 1950's the steward's responsibilities for recruitment seemed particularly important, as a means for stabilising organisation in the face of the more widespread use of lump labour. But measures designed to protect stewards from victimisation and to allow them greater flexibility in their site operations were

resisted by leaders within the Federation, including Coppock (228). Paradoxically, it seemed that the operation of effective steward bodies, committed to organising at site level was a threat to the established structures of the building unions. Coppock for example, argued that until the Federation was able to control its members on site, it should not ask for special facilities or conditions to be applied to the employment of stewards, although it was clear that, in an industry where employment was casual, these men were particularly vulnerable to sackings and the blacklist. (229) The formation of joint sites committees in London was met with the criticism that unofficial committees of this type tended to usurp the authority of official structures (230). The full recognition of shop stewards within the national working rule agreement may, in theory have been one of the planks of NFBTO policy, but it was one which was neglected in practice and stewards organisation and activity remained, to a considerable extent, outside of the scope of the joint negotiating machinery.

The fear of initiatives from men on the sites was encouraged and condoned in the climate of cold-war politics of the late 40's and early 50's. The independent, left-wing movement within the industry had been gathering momentum since 1935 around the paper the New Builders Leader, inspired, in some measure, by members of the Communist Party. Russian resistance to Nazi invasion in 1941 reversed the hostility to Communists at home and whilst the Communist Party's membership reached unprecedented levels its policies were adapted to the changed situation and its critical allegiance offered to the British government. Within the building industry, government measures designed to increase output, formerly

resisted by Communists, were now supported and encouraged, since productivity was so closely linked to the war effort and to the defence of the Soviet Union. The role and attitudes of trade union leaders encouraging production were endorsed and for so long as the Soviet Union was associated with the Allies, Communists supported the application of incentive payments, the site officer scheme and the industrialisation of production (231). The onset of the cold war and a renewed hostility towards the Western powers saw a dramatic reversal of Communist policy at a domestic level, embodied in the industrial context by resistance to measures which had formerly been accepted in the name of increased productivity. Although the 'officialisation' of the unofficial movement of the thirties was not completely halted, Communist Party members and sympathisers operated, as they had always done, most effectively within the building industry at site level. But they were now opposed by a more organised and articulate right wing, led by men such as Norman Kennedy and Jack Young. Kennedy understood the workings of shop steward organisation, since he had been Vice-Chair of the London Shop Stewards Council. An erstwhile Communist, he was elected to the EC of the ASW in 1949 and used his position to oppose any increase in the scope for independent rank and file activity, associated in the minds of the right-wing with Communist infiltration (232). The resistance of the ASW's EC to an extension of democracy through the establishment of a policy-making conference has already been noted and the fear of creeping Communism encouraged machinations in other unions which tended to remove control from the grasp of union members and place it more securely within the hands of union Executives and Officers.

In the AUBTW, a more radical society than the woodworkers, the

same tendencies were apparent. When in 1950 elections for the position of General Secretary were held to replace Luke Fawcett who was due to retire the following year, the eligibility of a Communist for the position of GS was called into question. The most likely candidate for the post was Harry Weaver, a Communist since 1934 (and a long-time supporter of the UBI). It was against his candidature that Luke Fawcett laid an unprecedented requirement on nominees for the position of Secretary. Although no provision was made for it in the rule-book, candidates were required to sign a 'document' declaring that they were industrially and politically able to fulfill the post of General Secretary. Since the AUBTW was affiliated to the Labour Party, it was argued that Communists would be unable to function effectively on behalf of the AUBTW on political matters. This manoeuvre not only ruled out the rights of members of the union to hold political expression. It also limited their capacity to control union procedure, since the 'document' was proposed by Fawcett, outwith the procedure for changing the union's rules (233). In the Painters Society too there were allegations and counter-allegations concerning political activities (234). The conservatism of the craft trade unionists, which had lacked a political machine in the 30's was encouraged and organised more effectively by the late 1940's through the intervention of 'Catholic Action' (235). Whilst their intention was apparently anti-communist, it tended also to be opposed to any initiative which might extend democratic practices within the trade union movement. The credibility of their, apparently incredible position was probably enhanced by the changes in Communist Party line on such key issues, to building workers, as productivity and incentive payments. The willingness of Communists to adjust

their position in the light of requirements from a foreign power facilitated the extension of right wing influence. The effect of this political conflict was then, to encourage existing tendencies to centralise power within the unions and to undermine the capacity of the members to initiate and take policy decisions.

### Conclusions

In 1959 a resolution was passed at the annual conference of the NFBTO calling for one union for the building industry (236). As on previous occasions it was opposed by the ASW, but despite their opposition it was passed. The support which it achieved was proof that the climate was changing for trade unionists in the building unions. The relative security of the late 40's, with peak membership throughout the federation's affiliates, had been replaced by periods of crisis, with stagnating or declining membership and recurrent financial difficulties for a majority of the unions. Innovations in techniques had posed innumerable demarcation problems, and threatened in the longer-term to undermine the rationale for craft methods of production (237). The recruitment of labour by labour-only subcontractors undermined the value of trade union membership and weakened union control of site operations. Even where a union presence was established, the relevance of negotiations at national level was of only limited importance to men whose take-home pay was determined largely by their capacity to negotiate a good site bonus.

The retirement of Coppock marked the end of an era. Many of the objects of the NFBTO were achieved whilst he was in office, yet with the pace of industrial change, the successes were less important than the failures. The development of solutions

to the problems which remained was tackled slowly and not too methodically by a leadership which remained committed to the policies and structures of an earlier period. If the problems were becoming apparent, the answers to them were not.

CHAPTER 6.

BUILDING TRADE UNIONS IN THE PROCESS OF MERGER,  
1960-71.

Building trade unions in the process of merger, 1960-71.

The 1960's established a 'crisis in industrial relations' as a permanent feature of the British way of life. It was characterised for public consumption, by the strike-happy shop steward vigorously pursuing higher earnings through 'wage drift' and the 'wild-cat strike'. Formal negotiations through the nationally recognised machinery for collective bargaining were by-passed, it was suggested, by the growth of informal bargaining practices at shop-floor level, giving a renewed impetus to the creation and credibility of shop steward organisations. The neater structure of trade unions in W. Germany and Sweden combined with the apparently more peaceful bargaining practices in these countries to provide an attractive model for employers, concerned with the problem, as they perceived it, of multi-unionism. The Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations (the Donovan Commission) was set up to examine the crisis in British industrial relations at a time when the number of small, unofficial strikes, whose disruptive effects on industrial production far outweighed their apparent significance, were increasing. Whilst the Donovan Commission gave little support to proposals for statutory changes to the framework of industrial relations, the decade was marked by the increased intervention of government in this area. The pay-pause of 1961-2 was followed by policies which maintained that increases in income should be kept within the limits of increased productivity. The return of a Labour government in 1964 promised a new socialist rhetoric for State intervention and when the Government's majority was increased in a further election in 1966, incomes policy, one facet of this new industrial relations crisis, was confirmed on a statutory basis. But increased government intervention was not confined to the area of pay. Whilst the Labour Government's proposals for

reform, embodied in their document 'In Place of Strife', failed to win the support or approval of trade union leaders or members, legislative innovations governing the employee's status and rights at work had more success. The Contracts of Employment Act 1963, and the Industrial Training Act 1964, passed by the Conservatives were followed by the Redundancy Payments Act, 1965. All of these measures symbolised a new government interest and involvement in industry and industrial relations. By the end of the decade, the scope for trade union organisation was modified in accordance with these new possibilities and constraints.

It was the engineering industry which provided the paradigm for the analysis of the Donovan Commission. The problems in construction were quite different from those in engineering, or indeed any other area. At a general level, although trade union density was declining, at least until 1968, aggregate union membership was still increasing, albeit slowly and rather unsteadily. (1) In construction however, the aggregate level of trade union organisation, as well as trade union density, decreased during this period, and towards the end of the decade the decline had reached catastrophic proportions. The erosion of trade union organisation affected the building trade sections of the general unions as well as the craft societies, and for all of them it was associated with a financial crisis, where day-to-day expenditure was met, to some extent from the reserves accumulated over past decades (2). Whilst trade unionists in manufacturing, and especially in engineering, were able to build up shop-floor organisation in response to the opportunities for informal, localised bargaining, in construction the emergence of shop steward organisation was constrained by the extension of labour-only sub-contracting, whereby work

was undertaken and payments made outside the provisions of the national working rule agreement. If trade union practice in manufacturing rested on informal negotiations between stewards and first line supervisors, trade union credibility and organisation was strengthened in consequence, amongst members on the shop floor. In building, civil engineering and ancillary industries 'informality' was often akin to individual bargaining arrangements between the operative and the subcontractor, the 'subbie' and the representative of the main contractor. The effect for trade union organisation, was nothing short of disastrous.

Since the crisis cannot be understood without reference to changes in the process of production, attention will firstly be directed to this area. The impact of national negotiations will be considered especially in relation to the credibility of the machinery for collective bargaining, and the growing problem of 'wage drift'. Finally the process of structural change will be discussed in relation to the mergers preceding and presaging the formation of the Union of Construction Allied Trades and Technicians (UCAATT) and the dissolution of the NEBTO.

#### Pt.1. The Construction Industry, 1960-71.

There was a steady increase in activity in construction, both in the volume of investment and in the number of operatives employed, until 1968 (3). The Tories, during their period in office, had pursued policies of increasing interest rates on loans, with low subsidies for house building by public authorities, with the effect of boosting the activities of private builders and encouraging speculation (4). In the context of a general acceleration in industrial production against a

background of scandal associated with Rachmanism in the private rented sector, and with an impending election encouraging an unwonted interest in the views of the electorate, the Government gave renewed attention in 1962/3 to the question of housing and slum clearance. Targets were agreed with the National Economic Development Council which, if reached, would expand output by 20% by 1966. Public investment in building too was expected to increase, whilst the demand for factory and industrial buildings accelerated (5).

The increase in output was continued with the return of a Labour Government in 1964. The declared objective of the National Plan, which was published in September 1965 was to secure an increase in production of 25% between 1965 and 1970 in each industry, and in order to achieve this objective in construction attention was directed to such issues as the allocation of contracts and training.

The national housing plan The Housing Programme 1965-1970 proposed 800,000 completions a year, divided equally between the public and the private sector. Added to this was demand for new factory building, for new motorways, reservoirs and other public projects in the civil engineering field. The intensive demands made on the industry's resources were linked to innovations in technique and organisation. The influence of the public sector increased, but so too did the average size of contracts put out to tender, and there was a growing tendency for firms to group into larger units to meet these changed demands.

The devaluation of the £ in November 1967 and the ensuing cuts in public expenditure had a serious impact on activities by

cutting demand both for public sector housebuilding and for other projects which relied on public funds. By 1968 capacity exceeded workload. Building costs had risen substantially whilst the number of new starts declined (6). This trend reflected tendencies which were apparent in the economy more generally, as the rate of inflation accelerated. The cutback in building was worsened by the successes of the Conservative Party in the Local Authority elections of 1967. Smaller and less competitive units were threatened by the contraction in activity and private contractors complained at the allocation of work to direct works depts. This led to political pressure for the closure of many direct labour organisations operated by local authorities. In some cases, long established direct works departments were dismantled, whilst in other areas their rights in respect of new building, as opposed to repair and maintenance work, were curtailed. In other instances, for example in the Greater London Council, less work was given to the Council's Direct Works, with a view, in the long term, of closing them down (7). Generally then the level and nature of activity in construction expended through to the late 60's, with the turning point in 1968. By 1970 many firms had been run down, whilst employment prospects diminished correspondingly, and a high level of unemployment was reported - 114,000 unemployed in construction by April of that year (8).

The expansion of the 60's was associated with a renewed interest in the potential of industrialised building. Prefabrication was nothing new, but the important feature of 'systems building' for craftsmen was the extent to which it eroded the value placed on craft skills. Industrialised building techniques set out with the purpose of economising, and dispensing with the dependence on traditional craft skills. They economised on

site labour costs, both by reducing the total demand for labour and by changing the type of labour which was required. 'Landspan' was typical of the systems which were applied in this period. It required five workmen, a forman or charge-hand, a cranedriver and three operatives, or 'assemblers'. This gang undertook to transport the units to the fixing area and to carry through the various tasks associated with their assembly. It was estimated that the volume and the value of construction carried out was far greater than that which could be achieved by traditional methods in a similar time. (9)

A system of this type posed a threat to the very existence of the traditional building craftsman. Firstly there was no need to employ the usual skilled operative for assembly purposes. Secondly the 'assemblers' who were employed could be paid at the labourer's rate, rather than at that of the craftsman. The change in terminology suggested the extent of changes in technique. It was not until the 1950's that the term 'construction' becomes common in place of 'building' and 'civil engineering'. Whilst 'building' implied the gradual process whereby materials were worked and put together, 'construction' suggests a swifter and less complex process of assembly, from a smaller and simpler range of constituent parts. The trend was towards 'construction', and this fact was clearly perceived by those leaders of the craft trade unions who were responsible for organising the conference on new techniques which was held in 1959.

At a time when the demand for new buildings put a premium on craft skills, systems building served both to rationalise the assembly process and to control the industry's existing labour force. As in earlier decades the acceleration of demand was accompanied by an increase in the fixed capital

requirement as a proportion of the industry's total capital. This was manifest both in the scale of operations, particularly high-rise buildings, and in the level of technological innovation with which they were associated. The impact on craft trade unionism, where each organisation relied on recruitment in just one, specialised area, was enormous. There was some complacency within the ASW, which claimed a more diversified membership than the other craft unions, and a greater variety of tools. But it was inevitable that demarcation issues would arise as a result of changing techniques and in some quarters it was felt that the woodworkers were too ready to appropriate tools which belonged, traditionally, to other trades (10).

Technological innovation alone could not erode the status and job security of the craft operative during the 1960's. Just as the post-war years had been marked both by technological and organisational changes, so too during the 60's, industrialised techniques were paralleled by a continuation and escalation of the practice of labour-only sub-contracting. It is not that new technology, or systems building, and labour-only sub-contracting were opposing influences or that their relative impact on trade union membership could be separately assessed. Rather they are a part of the same trend in the evolution of an industry which was relatively under-capitalised. When the expanding market for both new house-building and new industrial building was combined with an acceleration in the rate of output of the civil engineering side, a strain was placed on existing resources, of materials and manpower, which encouraged contractors to innovate, in various ways with respect to materials, techniques and the mode of employment. Since the construction industry is particularly vulnerable

to political change, and since the response to expansion must necessarily be a rapid one if a contractor is to derive the full benefit from an upswing, there is a tendency for periods of expansion to witness a short-lived frenzy of activity, in which every effort is made on the employers' side to capitalise on the available opportunities. Technological innovation is a slow process, which must be associated with planning and long term programmes if it is to be fully effective. But the use of alternative modes of employment provides a more flexible set of working arrangements and a 'labour force' which is amenable to the application of new technologies at whatever point this may become desirable. Labour-only contributes to the reduction in labour costs and encourages a fast turnover. So the new technologies and the use of the 'lump' are inextricably linked. Both derive from the intense fluctuations in construction activity, and neither factor, taken alone, can be said to be wholly responsible for the problems which beset the craft trade unions during the 60's. Together their influence was enormous. They represented the changing employment context and an entrenched employer resistance to site level trade union activity which had serious implications for all of the building trade unions.

The need for greater flexibility in the labour force and working operations of construction had concomitant effects upon training programmes. Craft skills were associated with the working of particular materials in accordance with fixed and traditional methods. Where employers were encouraged to industrialise the building process and to encourage flexibility as a means of facilitating the introduction of a wide range of new operations, they encouraged adjustments in training practices. Firstly, and most important, there was a decline

in the number of registered apprentices in the Construction Industry over the second half of the decade. In 1966 there were 112,000 trainees (all trades), a figure which was to decline every year, reaching 75,000 in 1970 (11). This drop was indicative both of the low premium placed on apprenticeship training at a formal level by employers and of their willingness to use labour-only sub-contracting as an alternative mode of employment to direct recruitment. Changes in manpower requirements and the need for increased flexibility led to a formal survey of operative skills, carried out by the Building Research Station, at the initiative of the NJCBI between 1963 and 1966. The survey, which studied workers on new construction sites, in repair and maintenance and in factories and workshops, in all some 5,400 operatives, concluded that the distinction between craftsmen and labourers was already blurred (12). The decline in the number of registered apprenticeships reflected the employers' concern at the adequacy of the traditional craft apprenticeship to meet the changing requirements of the newer forms of construction. Following the passage of the Industrial Training Act in 1964, the Construction Industry Training Board was set up to introduce new training schemes. A training levy was imposed on all firms in the industry having an annual wages bill in excess of £5,000. The trend was away from the practical training provided at site level, which, as the BRS survey noted, often took the form of 'sitting by Nellie'. Short, intensive courses of construction were considered to be more economic and efficient. The particular requirements of any one method necessitated the development of new skills in relation to the assembly process, but some preliminary training might be a prerequisite to the success of such an approach (13). The CITB therefore developed a programme known as the 'New Pattern of Training' which was

to provide for a reduction in the number of trade groupings, coupled with a broad base of training within the group, which was aimed at stimulating greater adaptability within the labour force in the long term (14). This was associated with a reduction in the level of specialisation which might be expected in any one area. It was argued that the apprentice trained craftsman never used a large part of the technical expertise which he had acquired. And on this basis a much reduced apprenticeship scheme would be more appropriate (15). This took effect in two ways. Firstly there was a reduction in the length of apprenticeships in 1964 from five years for most of the building trades to four years (16). Secondly there was an increase in the supply of labour trained in Government Skill Centres, usually on courses of six months duration (17). The Phelps Brown Committee called for an extension of adult training and recommended that a system of trade tests should be introduced, as a means of providing objective evidence about the qualifications of operatives. Their views in this respect tallied with the growing emphasis amongst the employers, on fluidity of the employment structure in specialist occupations.

The erosion of a distinctive category of skilled craft operatives was suggested then by three aspects of this change in apprenticeship training. Firstly there was the decline in the number of registered apprentices, reflected over-all in the changed proportion of crafts to non-craft operations. Secondly there was the decline in the range of skills which might be acquired by the apprentice in his reduced term of training. And finally there was an increase in the scope for 'specialist' work, where the operative might have obtained some abbreviated form of training, perhaps as an improver, or on a government

training course or with a firm with specialist requirements. The effect, as far as trade unionism amongst craftsmen was concerned was to put an end to any remaining vestige of control over entry to the trade. In the words of a trade union official 'you can't stand in the way of a person who's able to do what the employer requires' (18) and 'there's a lot to be said for these six month courses' (19). By changing the quantity and quality of labour requirements the employers were able to undermine resistance from craft trade unionists to a greater flexibility in operations. They were assisted in this by two factors on the trade union side. There was a strong desire not to appear as 'Luddites', not only among trade union leaders, but also amongst militants within the Federation's Regional Councils (20). And the desire to improve output of working class housing indicated concern with the social implications of production which was conspicuously absent on the employers' side. The last factor was especially important during periods of Labour Government, when many activists felt that union co-operation was essential for the achievement of Labour's programme. The changed approach to training had serious implications for those unions with craft traditions. In time it undermined the very foundations of trade unionism, not least because it was through the apprenticeship period that new entrants to the trade were imbued with notions of craft consciousness and craft pride. It was during his apprenticeship that a craftsman would first have contact with the union, unless his father had preceded him in the trade, as was often the case. And for many years apprentices had been permitted to join the union in a special section at a reduced rate, transferring to full membership when they came out of their time. The period of apprenticeship represented an introduction to the union as well as to the trade, and a reduction

in the indentured period meant a reduction in the influence which the union could exert in the first years of the craftsman's working life. The unions concerned recognised that there were 'difficulties in the recruitment of apprentices requiring an approach entirely different from pre-second World War days.' In the case of the ASW at least attempts were made through weekend schools and education programmes to rectify the problems associated with this erosion of the apprenticeship period. (21)

It has previously been suggested that the relationship, at the individual level between craftsman and labourer was paralleled within collective bargaining institutions, by the emphasis placed upon the building or the civil engineering agreement. Certainly during the 1960's, with the crisis facing the craft unions whose interests were most strongly represented through the Building Industry's Working Rule Agreement, a new momentum was developing on the craft side for the unification of the two agreements. The number of plus rates accepted within the Civil Engineering Agreement increased as industrial change widened the range of specialist tasks. And employers continued to prefer the Civil Engineering Agreement because it did not hamper production by controls on overtime. Commentators on collective bargaining in construction in this decade were unanimous in pointing to the failure of the building industry agreement as a mechanism for deciding pay and conditions on site. The breakdown in the relevance of central negotiations undermined the organisation of the craft trade unions at the same time as it reflected their weakness. And trade union leaders were propelled into urgent discussions on structural reform as the crisis became more apparent.

## Pt.2: The Crisis in Collective Bargaining

The Central negotiations in the building industry failed to maintain building trade wage rates, either in relation to wages in other industries, or in relation to the take-home pay of operatives who negotiated their own bonus on the job.

Some progress had been made on the question of working hours. In July 1959, just forty years after the 44 hour week had first been conceded in building, it was again ratified within the industry as the standard working week. There was some resistance within the NJCBI to any further reduction but as the movement for shorter working hours gained ground, so the case was strengthened within the NJCBI. In October 1962 a settlement came into effect reducing the working week to 42 hours in line with developments in other areas (22).

This concession on hours was not matched immediately by an improvement in wage rates. The building industry had moved from 2nd place in the wage rates by industry in 1938 to 12th place in 1963 (23). With the projected expansion of building activities the moment seemed right for a further wage movement and in January 1963 a claim was submitted for an increase of 1/6 per hour (approx. 26%) and a 40 hour working week. It was branded as unrealistic by the employers and the operatives' side of the NJCBI was itself far from united on the issue. When the claim first came before the NJC it was referred to an Ad-Hoc Committee. The agreement reached in Scotland in November 1962 for the introduction of the forty hour week in November of the following year embarrassed negotiators south of the border, and matters were not assisted by a reference to the National Incomes Commission which delayed consideration of the claim by the National Joint Council. From the point of

view of the NJC the most important of the NIC recommendations, which appeared in April 1963 were, that the 40 hour week should not be conceded: that the difficulties deriving from the Scottish settlement should be met by a wage increase, or a long term agreement embodying more than one increase, and that the figure of 3 - 3½% should be a guide to the final settlement. As in the mid 30's when activity in the industry was accelerating, the employers adhered to the principle of a long-term settlement, arguing that any new wages agreement should cover a period of two to three years. Two offers were made on this basis, both rejecting a reduction in working hours. And both packages were turned down by the representatives of the operatives, who called for strike action in support of their claim. The first nation wide building strike since 1924 started on 19th August 1963. It took three forms - one week stoppages of work on selected sites, bans on overtime and bans on the working of incentive schemes. The NFBTO claimed that 200,000 men stopped work during the course of that week, but later the Ministry of Labour suggested that the figure was only 60,000 (24).

The industrial action was ended after just one week, with agreement on a package settlement which met with a mixed response from the operatives' negotiating panel. The settlement provided for an over-all increase of 9d an hour for craftsmen to be paid in three installments between November 1963 and November 1965, with a corresponding raise of 5d an hour for labourers. The working week was to be reduced on November 2nd 1964 from 42 to 41 hours, and within the period covered by the agreement, a non-contributory sick pay scheme was to be implemented. In view of the government's concern with limiting pay increases to the rise in productivity,

consideration was to be given to the possibility of relating future changes in standard rates of wages to 'an appropriate index of national productivity' in place of the existing link with the Index of Retail Prices. The response from the trade union leadership to this package was far from unanimous. The vote taken within the meeting of the Joint Executives, on the basis of the number of seats held by unions within the NJCBI, ratified the agreement by a majority of only three, with the AUBTW, the T&GWU, the plasterers and the plumbers against. The terms represented only a marginal advance on those discussed by the Negotiating Committee before the stoppage of work. The wage increases were still to be phased over three annual payments, and were a long way from the original claim of 1/6 an hour increase. The compromise over working hours was offset by the widening of the differentials between craftsmens' and labourers' wage rates. And the agreement prepared the way for the abolition of the sliding scale.

If the agreement met with a divided response amongst the Executives of the various unions concerned, it received little enthusiasm amongst the active members who had been responsible for organising and implementing the strike decision. There was some feeling that, although the leadership had asked for and received support for the stoppage, they had abandoned the struggle before it had really got under way. Resolutions to this effect were passed at the union conferences that year. AUBTW members wanted to overturn the settlement, although the ASW was more cautious, stating simply that the Federation's negotiators had failed to achieve their target and should go back for the rest. Within the Amalgamated Society of Painters and Decorators resolutions flooded in from

branches complaining at the terms of the agreement, and the consensus amongst the membership of other unions, if the discussion at the Federation's annual conference is any indication, was that further improvements were necessary. (25)

The economic and political climate for negotiations seemed good during the mid-60's. Output was projected for expansion and the government's building programme depended on the co-operation of labour within the construction industry. Yet the unions' negotiators were unable or unwilling to take advantage of these factors in wage bargaining. Again they accepted the employers deal spanning a three year period. The next settlement, agreed on 25th November 1965 provided for a 40 hour 5 day working week, with the standard rate of wages to rise by 2d an hour to compensate for the loss of the hour. Standard hourly wage rates were to rise by 3d an hour for craftsmen and 2½d an hour for labourers on 7 November 1966, with a further increase of 3½d for craftsmen and 2½d for labourers on 6 November 1967. The most important feature of the settlement was the abolition of the sliding scale, which was to be discontinued after February 1968 (26). The sliding scale had, over the years, been the cause of considerable dissatisfaction, since it failed to ensure that earnings rose at the same pace as prices. It was argued too that its effect was to reduce the amount which the employers were prepared to pay. Yet it had positive advantages insofar as it ensured that if the Retail Price Index showed sufficient movement, there would be some compensating adjustment in wage levels, and periodically the sliding scale rate was consolidated into the national rate, thereby affecting overtime and bonus calculation. Moreover the sliding scale did not preclude renegotiation of the basic rate, and it might be expected that during a period of

escalating inflation, it would provide a useful adjunct to central wage bargaining. Its abolition removed an important safety valve from the workings of the national negotiating machinery. Henceforth wage rates depended solely on the abilities of the negotiators to mobilise members and convince employers of the value of each and every claim. This was a vulnerable position for leaders of unions whose membership was declining at an alarming pace.

Whilst a long term agreement suited the interests of the employers, by providing the assurance of steady labour costs for the forthcoming period, it had some advantages too for the operatives who might otherwise have been caught in the Wages Freeze of 1966. Trade unionists in construction regularly faced the problem that the employers pushed through long-term wages settlements when the opportunities for negotiation on behalf of the trade unions were improving, but they did not wholly lose by the 1965 agreement which established wage levels in advance of the 1966 Prices and Incomes Act and which were merely deferred for six months as a result of this legislation. The experience under the Tories in the early 1960's had already pinpointed the problems which might arise where the nationally negotiated rate was held back whilst local settlements were uncontrolled. The Prices and Incomes Act threatened to augment the disparity between the nationally negotiated agreement and the amount actually paid out at site level. In the context of a high demand for labour, payments in excess of the national rate - whether through a bonus scheme or as a 'lump' payment, were to become more common. And rates of wages were raised in many areas in spite of the freeze (27).

The employers noted that the most important long-term consequences of the Government's Incomes Policy was not the deferment of wage increases negotiated during 1965. Rather it was the impact of site level bargaining arrangements on the central machinery for collective bargaining. As they succinctly put it:

'Already in the post war period the authority of unions' national executives has suffered considerably because their ability to negotiate improvements in conditions has, too often, proved in practice to be markedly less than that of site stewards and local union officers. If, as seems likely, central collective bargaining is to be trammelled even more in the future by the need to take directly into account factors quite outside the industry itself, other ways may have to be found of maintaining the authority of the union leaders. While this is a problem mainly for the trade unions, it is a problem which employers must not ignore. They often rely upon the authority of the union leaders for enforcing discipline: if this authority is undermined too much the employers will suffer in the long run.' (28)

These problems of credibility highlighted the need for renewed attention to the industry's wage structure and industrial practices.

The National Joint Councils' machinery was adjusted in 1964 by the amalgamation of the joint machineries and agreements for England and Wales and for Scotland. The size of the merged Council was increased to make room for representatives of the Scottish organisations on both sides, although some bodies, in particular the National Federation of Painters and

the Scottish Plumbing Employers' Federation remained outside. The discrepancy in hours between England and Scotland was eliminated by the 1965 settlement which reduced the working week to 40 hours in England and Wales, without any corresponding reduction in Scotland.(29) A dispute in Scotland during 1963/4 over a claim for parity on weekly wages with England, which meant effectively a higher hourly rate to compensate for the shorter working week, was resolved by a phased increase to be effected between Mar 1964 and Nov 1965. By that date it was expected that rates and conditions would be equalised on both sides of the border. (30) Amalgamation of the two agreements meant that there was less scope for leapfrogging between England and Scotland, and that the employers in England were less likely to be upstaged by an agreement North of the border.

There was a growing attention to the problems of wage bargaining in the building industry, by government bodies as well as by those who were party to negotiations during the sixties. But none of the official enquiries or reports instituted over this period attacked the central problems posed for collective bargaining in the building industry by labour-only. The Building Research Station's report on Building operatives' work (31) was followed by the Report of a Court of Inquiry (32). And the Ministers of Labour and Public Buildings and Works decided that an independent inquiry should be made into the question of labour-only sub-contracting, a question which was central to the problem of the credibility of national negotiations. This was opposed both by the NFBTE and by the FCBC who clearly expected such an inquiry, under a Labour Government to come out against the practice. They were to be suitably gratified by the report of the

Helms-Brown Committee which was set up in 1967 to look into the engagement and use of labour in building and civil engineering with particular reference to the problems of 'the lump'. In spite of their opposition to its establishment the Helms-Brown Cttee seemed to vindicate the employers' viewpoint. Although it pointed to abuses of the present arrangements, it concluded that

'The evidence we have assembled leads us to conclude that were it possible to outlaw labour-only sub-contracting altogether the present effect on the working arrangements of the industry would on balance be disadvantageous.' (33)

In industry more generally there was a move away from the traditional pattern of central collective bargaining, with the shift in emphasis towards company or plant level agreements. This trend, which was already underway by the mid-60's was boosted by a CBI report on Productivity Bargaining. The Donovan Report encouraged initiatives to remove the dichotomy between central and workplace levels of bargaining. The prevailing drift was to company level settlements which encouraged union membership through the application of check-off agreements.

Negotiations began at the end of 1967 on a claim for £17.11.8 for craftsmen and £15 for labourers. Discussions continued through the early months of 1968, and it seemed likely that a further long term settlement would be concluded. On May 31 1968 Barbara Castle, then first Secretary of State referred the claim to the National Board for Prices and Incomes (34). Once the reference was made negotiations were suspended whilst both sides prepared their case for the Board. The task of invest-

igating the industry's pay-structure was a complex one, and the statutory period of three months allowed for the report had twice to be extended by the government. The previous settlement was due to expire at the end of October 1968, yet it became clear during that month that the report could not be published before the end of November. The Joint Negotiating Committee therefore reached unanimous agreement on the need for an interim pay settlement, until the Board's Report could be made and assimilated. An offer, of 3½d an hour for craftsmen and 2½d for labourers was accepted and ratified by the NJC on 24 October 1968, to come into effect from 4 November. However the interim increases were immediately referred to the Prices and Incomes Board, with a threat from the government that the full amount would be frozen unless there was an undertaking that the PIB's ruling on the 1d an hour interim award to offset the increased cost of living should be taken into account when calculating the total increase over the previous twelve months (35). In November the PIB reported that the 1d an hour cost of living increase must count as part of the 3½% currently permitted under incomes policy. They also required that there should be no further rise for a period of twelve months, with an emphasis on the value of productivity schemes, and a revision of the grading structure. The reports (36) were wholly unacceptable to the trade unions, although trade union leaders who had accepted the logic of incomes policy were caught in a double bind. The members were unlikely to accept decisions which singled them out for special attention, although their leaders were reluctant to lead them into confrontation with a Labour government over policies which they personally accepted (37). Talks of strike action were countered by the Government with the reference of the interim award to the NBITI, and a standstill order was imposed covering the whole of the award.

The employers faced with the threat of a freeze on the full amount which they had conceded in October made a new, reduced offer of 2½d an hour for craftsmen and 2d an hour for labourers, on the rate which was in force before October (i.e. a decrease of 1d an hour for all operatives). Reluctant to assume the vanguard of a direct attack on the government's incomes policy, the unions' negotiators agreed. Accordingly from 28 December 1968, rates of pay were decreased by 1d an hour and building operatives suffered their first decline in money wages since 1933 (38).

The government's dramatic incursion into industrial relations in construction did nothing to bolster the credibility of the trade union leaders who were involved in central collective bargaining. Negotiations over wage rates were of limited significance to the building worker on site, and for this reason it would be difficult for the union leadership to mobilise an opposition to the government's policies. Their own reluctance to oppose incomes policy made a solution especially difficult, since the government seemed to have singled out building, civil engineering and ancillary activities as an example of its determination to curtail wage increases unless they could be tied to increases in productivity. To account for their problems by reference to their role as a political football was no answer to the decline in membership and the collapse of trade union organisation. And it was little consolation to know that trade union members in other industries were able to circumvent the implications of statutory incomes policy with reference to productivity deals. The problems of the operatives' side of the NJCBI was that they could not challenge the government. For, since their negotiations did not relate to

the diverse work situations in construction, could they find a way around its policies. Their collective face was saved only to the extent that the employers were willing to intervene with a reduced offer, which meant a cut in money wages for building trades operatives at a time when inflation was accelerating. Their humiliation was symptomatic of the crisis in trade unionism in construction.

It was not until 1970 that the wage claim submitted in 1967 was actually met. In a comprehensive agreement effective from 2 Feb 1970 the standard rates were raised to £17.11.8 for craftsmen and £15.0.0 for labourers, with provisions for further increases to £20.0.0 for craftsmen and £17.0.0 for labourers by June 1971. In return there were concessions regarding the flexible use of labour and entry into the industry. The old emergency disputes procedure was abolished (the 'Green Book') and all disputes were brought within the ambit of the NJCBI. General guidelines were established for incentive and productivity schemes and provisions made for payments adjustments for apprentices (39).

This agreement could not disguise the fact that the history of central bargaining over pay during the 1960's was a disaster for the credibility of trade union organisation in construction. The problems could not be resolved immediately or easily, and they laid the basis for the massive wave of discontent and militancy expressed by building workers during the 1972 strike. Collective bargaining was reformulated in the 70's and a new line established between the building and civil engineering agreements. But for so long as the independent unions maintained their separate and distinctive identities, there was no solution to the crisis.

Age drift was not of course peculiar to the building and civil engineering industries. But its implications for trade union organisation were markedly different than in for example engineering, where the diminishing significance of national collective bargaining was paralleled by the strengthening of shop floor organisation in the pursuit of improved piece work earnings. Collective organisation was only one method available to the operative in construction as a means of improving take home pay. And even on those larger sites where the level of unionisation was high the influence of central trade union bodies might be insignificant (40).

When the membership voted to accept payment by results in 1947 they did so in the expectation that normal constitutional practices would be observed. It was expected then that the trade unions would exercise control over this aspect of pay in the same way as they had over plain time rates. But it was precisely the absence of collective control which undermined trade union organisation. The absence of any uniform scheme, providing a range of target and bonus payments weakened the possibilities of controlling bonus from national level. This problem was recognised within the AUBTW and an attempt was made to confront it by the publication of a booklet giving guidelines for the operation of bonus schemes (41). Whilst these guidelines were not accepted by the employers, they provided at least a framework of reference for stewards who were involved in negotiations on bonus questions. Leaders of the ASW, and George Smith in particular, were reluctant to accept any wider attempt, within the Federation to establish such guidelines. Craftsmen faced varying problems in relation to the assessment of bonus payments, and Smith argued that these would be more complex for woodworkers than for bricklayers or

plasterers. Questions of incentive targets raised difficulties in respect of the application of new techniques and new materials, as well as the measurement of output. There was no likelihood of the ASW leadership surrendering their autonomy on policy matters of this kind in the interests of a target bonus scheme which might not in any case, carry any weight either with operatives or employers. In 1961 a resolution was passed within the NFBTO, against the opposition of the ASW representatives, to the effect that a 'uniform structure of bonus schemes should be formulated by joint agreement with the employers, and that although the actual stipulation of targets and bonus payments is not necessary at this stage ... an early move towards control and co-ordination is imperative.' (42)

The acceptance of incentives had split apart the labour force in construction. Within the trade union movement there were two sets of members - those on incentives, and those on basic rates, and the gap in between the two was constantly increasing. The official estimate of members on incentive payments was very low: 14% in 1962 rising to some 17% by 1966 (43). But a larger proportion received some kind of lieu rate or plus payments, mostly unrelated to productivity. And in the public sector, in local authorities and the health service, payments were made for the most part at, or only slightly above the nationally negotiated rates. The differentials which emerged between craftsmen, especially in the application of lieu payments was noted in the previous chapter and it is not surprising that it was the leadership of the woodworkers, best able to benefit from this dog eat dog situation, who opposed the introduction of a standardised and uniform framework for bonus.

The most divisive effect of incentive payments was the encouragement given to the growing independence of site settlements, itself associated with the spread of labour-only. The extent of LOSC by the mid-60's can only be estimated, but it was apparent that its use was widespread. The Phelps Brown Committee of Inquiry based its comments on surveys carried out by the NFBTE and the FCEC which included questions on the sub-contraction of work on a labour only basis. As regards private house building it was estimated that in the aggregate, one quarter of the whole annual payments for labour were made to labour-only sub-contractors. However amongst the largest firms, that is those building 500 or more houses per year, the proportion was more like one third. The 'lump' was more widespread in the South than in the North, whilst it was virtually non-existent in Scotland. On a craft basis, it was estimated that it was most commonly to be found amongst bricklayers, carpenters and joiners and plasterers. Amongst general builders and contractors and local authorities, the proportion was rather lower, and according to returns made to the FCEC, it was still less significant within civil engineering (44).

The introduction of Selective Employment Tax in 1966 encouraged the use of 'the lump' throughout the industry. The tax was intended as a means of reducing overmanning, by levying a percentage tax amount on the payroll for all employees who worked for twenty hours or more in any one week. Clearly the implications of the tax would be very different for the contractor who utilised the services of sub-contractors for labour only, than for a contractor with a large number of employees. SET had a disastrous effect in construction as far as the unions were concerned, since it encouraged building employers to dispense with the services of those operatives who were directly

employed in favour of those who were 'on the lump' (45). Operatives who had resisted working on this basis in the past were finding their employment opportunities reduced (46). And the development of labour-only holding companies, which supplied labour made the problem still more difficult (47). The men might be paid by the agency or the firm, but in the latter case with the payment of a fee from the contractors to the agency. With either method the effect was to encourage contractors to seek operatives on a 'lump' basis (48).

The introduction of SET, and the establishment of labour-only agencies could not on their own create the problem of the 'lump'. Rather, it was the intensification of the demand for skilled labour, combined with the recurrent shortages of materials, both of them features of the cyclical pattern of boom and slump, which encouraged employers to seek a mode of recruitment which undermined the collective resistance of labour. Attempts on the part of the unions to discipline their members met with a singular lack of success. From the AUSTW national office, a leaflet was sent out to all members telling them that if they worked for sub-contractors they could not expect the protection or the assistance of their union when in difficulties. The move merely served to hasten the downward trend of the membership figures! (49) Attempts to carry a constitutional amendment to the working rule agreement to eliminate abuses associated with LOSC had received support from the Phelps Brown Report, together with recommendations for legislation. It is a mark of the weakness of trade union organisation that this move represented the collective union response to a trend which threatened to decimate them (50). The Labour Government was interested in the question because of the problem of tax evasion, and a bill to regulate labour only sub-

contracting was introduced in to the House of Commons in April 1970 (51). This followed the proposals of Phelps Brown insofar as it aimed to establish the registration of all 'contractors' who could prove that they were proper employers of labour. But it was also proposed to levy contractors employing unregistered sub-contractors up to 20% of the labour content of the sub-contract sum. Moreover a contractor would be obliged to withhold 32% of the labour sum in lieu of income tax payable by the operatives. The Bill fell with the ending of Labour's period in office in 1970. The prospects of a simple, legislative solution to the problem of the 'lump' were never auspicious. And by 1970 more radical initiatives were necessary if trade union organisation in this sector was to continue to have any meaning. Legislative constraints on labour-only were directed primarily at tax evasion and could not, in themselves, suffice.

The problems of devising and working incentive schemes, together with the impact of labour-only, contributed to the growth of militancy on particular jobs, especially in London and Liverpool.

Strikes in construction during the 60's tended to be small scale - affecting only a few workers and lasting only for a short period of time. The number of strikes however was fairly high, since bonus and conditions had to be fought for on each new site. During the period 1961-70 there was an average number of 267 strikes a year in construction, slightly higher either than transport or vehicle production, with annual averages of 262 and 256 respectively (52). Only in mining and quarrying and in metals, engineering and shipbuilding was the average number of strikes higher over the same period, although in both cases the figure was considerably in excess of that for

construction (701 and 939 respectively). But if the number or scale of strikes is estimated in relation to the size of the workforce it has been shown that construction ranks lower than industrial sectors which have fewer strikes (53). It seems likely that strike statistics for construction may be underestimated, firstly because DE records exclude strikes involving fewer than ten workers or which do not involve the minimum of 100 strike days. Secondly it seems probable that many strikes in the industry might be unreported simply because site management dealt with the question without recourse to higher authority and no formal record of the incident was kept.

It was only on the larger sites that a high level of organisation was a serious possibility. The scale and the duration of the works in progress defined both the nature of labour recruitment to the site and the efforts of trade unionists to get it unionised. An employer claimed that some of the large firms would be more likely to use direct employment on the large, prestigious projects, because of the recognised advantages in attracting better and more competent tradesmen, precisely the kind of person who, through training and skill would be more likely to belong to a trade union. Workers might be engaged under labour-only, as well as direct employment, and firms were careful to avoid recruiting active trade unionists to their sites (54). Where a site was fairly small there was less impetus for organisation, both from officials and from the men on the job. Attention was concentrated on the larger operations and it has been noted that where this was successful in building effective trade union organisation, there was likely to be a spin-off effect to other, smaller sites in the same locality (55). Shop stewards' committees were fairly rare,

for even if there was a union presence on site it might come from one, or at the most two unions, with workers in other trades remaining unorganised (56). Federation stewards were recognised by the employers' side only from 1964, but even then it was unusual for a full committee to be established with a Federation steward in office (57).

The difficulties of organising on site, against victimisation, the blacklist and the lump, and within a casual labour market were illustrated in two large and protracted disputes during the sixties - at Myton's site at the Barbican and at the Ministry of Public Buildings office works in the Horseferry Road, London. A detailed account of such disputes is outside of the scope of a study of trade union structure, but it is important to note the view, which was increasingly widespread amongst the active trade union members who were largely responsible for sustaining trade union organisation on the bigger sites, that there was little being done for them at national level within their own unions. Not only were the rates negotiated at national level irrelevant to the earnings which such workers expected. They also argued at times that there was little interest from, or contact with union officials. It was often difficult for activists who became blacklisted to find work and the external situation encouraged the independence and self-reliance of operatives in dealing with their own situation. It may indeed be the case that the industry attracts men with those qualities, but whether or not this is true, the operative on a building site must first of all look to the regulation of his own problems. It has been suggested that the characteristics of the industry help to explain why it is that when a site is well organised, this has often been achieved

by political activists - particularly Communist Party members (58). And the extent of their influence has been evidenced by the strength and longevity of unofficial, or rank and file organisations. Although the NBL had died in the 1950's, this tradition of grass roots activity had by no means disappeared. The London Joint Sites Shop Stewards Committee was noted by Cameron for its 'subversive and mischievous' influence in bringing about the disputes at the Barbican and the Horseferry Road, and at least two of its leading members, Jack Henry and Lou Lewis, were known to be members of the Communist Party (59). As unofficial activity built up during the latter part of the sixties it was to be consolidated around the paper the Building Workers Charter which was published from 1970. Communist Party militants cannot create unofficial action in a haven of peaceful and well-regulated industrial relations. They are able to extend their influence most effectively where there is already a climate of discontent. The reasons for this have been variously suggested - the casual nature of employment and tough working conditions, employer resistance to trade union organisation and the operation of the blacklist. The 'trouble-makers' identified by Cameron were merely articulating the problems of a workforce subjected to arbitrary management decisions, and it is for this reason that they could find support both on the Barbican and the Horseferry Road sites and elsewhere.

Whilst unofficial organisation and activity on site may widen the rift between operatives and their own trade union officials, the effects were not the same from one union to another, or indeed between one layer of officials and another. The procedure for giving official support to a strike differed between unions, as Cameron noted (60). This power was in the

hands of the EC, both in the T&GWU and in the ASW, but in the case of the AUBTW official recognition and support for a stoppage could be authorised by any full-time officers of the union, although the ratification of the EC was subsequently required. This difference may account for the greater willingness of the AUBTW to extend recognition to the strikes at Barbican and Horseferry Road, whereas the ASW leadership appeared to be reluctant in both cases to give the union's formal backing to the strikers. The prevailing political attitudes within these bodies will also have had some effect, since the EC of the ASW, with its right wing political machine was generally out of sympathy with the aims and operations of the site activists. As far as the dispute at the Barbican was concerned, the EC of the ASW at no time gave official recognition, and in fact Lou Lewis was warned not to involve ASW members in any stoppage. The AUBTW, by contrast, initially paid strike benefit although this was later withdrawn. The T&GWU too gave support for a brief period, and it is possibly a reflection of ASW influence that, following that union's example, the recognition extended by other unions at the outbreak of the dispute was subsequently withdrawn. However at the Horseferry Road all three unions gave official support for the strikers in the beginning, but the ASW withdrew this after a short interval and complained at the failure of others to follow their lead. As George Smith put it: (and the comment was aimed at the T&GWU) 'the situation arose out of the desire of particular unions to prove that they were more militant than others'. (61)

The District Officials of the ASW were associated in the main with the position taken by their own full-time Executive Council. Visits of the District Organiser to the Barbican

site took place in order to instruct members to end the picketing. And although the ASW's District Organiser initially recommended support for the strikers in both instances, he does not seem to have been associated subsequently with the strikers opposition to the manoeuvres of their Executive (62). Within the AUBTW there was a greater difference between the position of national and district or divisional officers. Some of the members who had been associated with the Mytons dispute felt that the national officers had been prepared to negotiate with Mytons at a time when that company would not honour existing obligations to hold talks with District Officers (63). And in the gap between the 'national people' (in this instance the part-time executive) and the District and Divisional officers, there was a split which was representative of two conflicting views of the union and its function. On the one hand there were the advocates of 'better industrial relations'. And on the other there were those who pushed for better site organisation, with a tougher and less compromising attitude towards the employers (64).

The relations between national officers and district level officials of the various unions differed according to the timing and context of the issues which were in question. London was in many ways atypical, because of the size of some of the sites and the concentration of workers, and for these reasons the number and intensity of disputes was rather greater than in other areas. Yet it was in London that the contradictory features of building trade unionism were most apparent. Labour-only sub-contracting was more common in the capital than in the provinces. Yet London held some of the most militant workers in the industry, responsible for some of the

best organised sites (with the possible exception of Liverpool). By the late 60's the major craft unions had shifted their headquarters to London, and yet it was there that national influence was most attenuated. Not only was trade union control, at national level eroded by the loss of members, as an ever-increasing proportion of operatives opted for the dubious advantages of labour only. It was also weakened, even where trade union membership was high, by the very strength of site organisation which provided its best defence. So far as the Barbican was concerned, Cameron concluded that the unions' national officials had lost control, and that, for all practical purposes it was the works' committee who were in control at site level. And although there were few disputes of the scale or importance of the Barbican, it is nonetheless the case that the influence of trade unionism, from the national level, did not increase in proportion as membership on a particular site rose. If the existence of labour-only suggests independence and self-reliance amongst building operatives, so too does the attitude of many active trade unionists. And the latter were no more likely than the former to bolster the flagging image of the unions' national negotiators vis a vis the employers. Not only was trade union membership in the industry, as a proportion of workforce employed, on the wane. But the influence and control of the unions amongst their own members was seriously eroded.

Trade union strategy in construction during the late 60's evolved in response to this problem. The loss of control over workers on site provided an important incentive for union negotiators to participate in company agreements. These had the potential to curtail the decline in membership in two ways. Firstly, if the employer could be persuaded to negotiate on

a company basis, he might find an interest in encouraging trade union membership, since it would facilitate closer joint control of industrial relations. And secondly, by being seen to do something about pay at a level which was relevant to the worker on site the company agreement might be expected to give a boost to membership (65). Three important agreements had been concluded by the time of the Phelps Brown Report - with Tersons Ltd., with John Laing Construction Ltd. and with C.M. Yuill Ltd. of Hartlepool. The problem of relating company agreements to the existing national agreement was recognised, especially since the number of small employers in the industry precluded the abolition of the national agreement as a means of setting the standard rates of pay. But it was argued that the larger employers, many of whom retained staff in a personnel capacity might be willing to formalise relations with the unions at company level, and the prospects of concluding check-off arrangements represented an attractive means of stabilising membership (66). It has been suggested that employers might favour check-off to the extent that, with such an arrangement they would be less bothered by trade union officials visiting their sites, and it was seen, by some officials, as the first step in a move towards the closed shop (67). Despite the conclusion of the company agreements mentioned above, the employers were notably reluctant to depart from the principle of national negotiations which they had upheld for so long. It served their interests well to establish the basic rate in accordance with the interests of the numerous small employers in the industry, and the union's interest in check-off and the closed shop provided little incentive for them to change their views when they could use labour-only sub-contracting as a means of curbing labour militance (68).

It was in the public sector that the most stable trade union organisation was to be found. Of the 409,000 building workers outside the building and civil engineering agreements in the late 1960's the vast majority - some 130,000 for England, Scotland and Wales were employed by local authorities. In addition there were some 18,000 employed in government departments, 14,000 in the National Health Service and nearly 25,000 in nationalised industries including the waterworks. These workers did not confront the enormous problems which restricted trade union organisation in the private sector. Permanent employment in local authorities and other public undertakings facilitated organisation and a disproportionate number of union members were found in these areas. Although unit size of undertaking was relatively small the attitude of employers to trade union organisation was less obstructive than in private employment and there had been a more effective defence of trade union rights against the incursion of labour-only sub-contractors.

(69) Pay of the building operatives in the public sector was generally related to the national agreement for the building industry, even if this was not actually specified. But earnings in the public sector tended to be rather lower primarily because a large proportion of the work which was undertaken was in the field of repair and maintenance, where incentive schemes were less easy to apply and less readily adopted by the authorities concerned. Trade union organisation was steady, but stewards had less authority concerning pay issues because money from incentive schemes was less important to earnings over-all than with the private firms. The exceptions were as in the private sector in the largest centres of employment, cities such as Manchester and Sheffield where there were large direct works departments (70). Boom conditions brought the

number of directly employed public sector building workers to a peak in 1967 but in the context of public expenditure cuts and the political counter-attack of Tory controlled local authorities from 1968 the numbers were reduced. And since union members were disproportionately to be found in the public sector, the cuts reinforced the downward drift in union membership.

Shop steward organisation, both in the public and in the private sector was still rooted at the end of the sixties in craft organisation. A steward represented workers in his own trade, and did not automatically assume responsibilities for men in other trades. In principle a site was organised by the first union member who was taken on who became steward to his trade until there were a sufficient number employed for elections to be held (71). The trade steward received his credentials from his own trade union and was responsible to the District Committee of that union to whom he should, in principle submit a quarterly report. His responsibilities on site were to his own union members. His two most important functions related to organisation and to negotiation of bonus rates. Only if an active steward or stewards were elected was there any likelihood of the 'lump' being challenged on that site. And with a transitory workforce it required an active steward to carry out regular card checks to maintain the organisation on which his authority finally rested. The central task for the steward, in the eyes of his members was negotiation of bonus. Incentive payments varied between trades and the operation of bonus required a steward from each trade to negotiate on behalf of that trade with the site agent or foreman. Different trades were concentrated on site at different stages of the job. Bricklayers and carpenters for example, might be employed in

larger numbers at an earlier stage in a job than painters or plumbers. So that the timing of negotiations over incentive payments for the various trades would vary according to the stage which the job had reached. Agreements were often informal and unwritten and it was unlikely that trades would co-operate over negotiations on bonus unless the job was especially well organised or sufficiently larger for an overall bonus scheme to be applied to all craftsmen (72). Although the duties of stewards related primarily to their own trade, they were not prohibited from participating in joint committees with other trades, although the organisational difficulties outlined above militated against it where operatives were not directly employed - that is where employment was on a casual basis.

It was through unofficial organisation that the most positive steps were taken to link trades on site, and to link stewards across sites encompassing the public as well as the private sector. Reference has already been made to the rift between activists on site and national officers of the building trades unions. The unusual longevity of rank and file papers and the strength of the unofficial movements boosted union organisation in a way which was vital to its survival, although such bodies continued to be a 'thorn in the flesh' of union leaders. In the words of Les Wood, GS of UCATT from 1979,

"the unofficial groups injected into the broad membership the kind of fighting spirit that is necessary when one is set on a course of battle ... As groups designed to exert pressure it has to be acknowledged that their efforts were not without achievement, even though they caused considerable chagrin to the official leadership." (73)

Unofficial liaison had long been maintained between shop stewards

from the public and the private sectors in the ASP through the medium of quarterly meetings, convened by the District Management Committees in certain areas. At these district delegate meetings as they were known, stewards would report on the state of organisation on their particular jobs. In the well-organised centres such as London, Liverpool, Manchester and the North East of England meetings might be held on a regular basis, although attendance would devolve on the most active and committed stewards, frequently those who were politically active, often within the Communist Party. The meetings in themselves had no powers to make policy. They were convened for the purpose of discussion, but they certainly provided an important venue for the exchange of ideas and the development of organisation. They provided a forum for political activists through which campaigns could be built and it is likely that the rank and file movements which were successfully sustained for such long periods were based essentially in this regular contact between active stewards at District level, within the trade. Similar meetings or councils of shop stewards as they were known were held within the ASP&D, at least in the larger centres. In places such as Liverpool, London and the North East meetings were regularly held and in a city the size of Sheffield there was an attendance of around 30 stewards (74).

The unofficial movements of the sixties were founded with the object of uniting trades and crossing organisational barriers, on each site and within each locality. The London Building Workers Joint Sites Committee was formed in 1964 and rapidly made contact with similar bodies in other areas - in Liverpool, Manchester and Newcastle (75). The earliest campaigns of the movement in the 1930's were for unity - between trades and between craftsmen and labourers, with the emphasis on activity

on site. In the 60's stewards were still struggling against the boundaries between trades, defined by the very structure of national organisation. The divisions between trades encouraged by separate negotiations over bonus were challenged by claims for collective bonus, with a view to breaking down the distinctions within the craft hierarchy which operated, overall to the detriment of unity (76). From the individual movements in the larger cities - the London Joint Sites Committee, the Merseyside Building Workers Movement formed out of the Liverpool Joiners Unity Movement and the Building Workers Forum in Manchester a new national rank and file paper was launched in 1970 - the Building Workers Charter. The paper, edited by Lou Lewis of the ASW was, during its brief existence, one of the most successful rank and file papers produced since the war. The founding conference of the 'Charter Group' attracted over 250 delegates and at a time when the unions which were rooted in craft organisation still produced the Monthly Journals which were part of their tradition, the Charter provided a readable publication in tabloid format which claimed sales of 10,000 per issue in its first year of publication (77). The undoubted successes of the Charter - highlighted in the national strike of 1972 should not be allowed to disguise the serious problems confronting trade unionists in the building industry in this period. It was certainly the case that organisation at the national level was seriously undermined. The rank and file movement flourished to the extent that its supporters could boost the organisation and enthusiasm for combatting the 'lump'. It took off at a time when difficulties concerning central wage negotiations were accentuated by the impact of government incomes policies. And it found supporters in centres which had not in the past been the main focus for militant building trade unionism (78). In an industry where

fewer than one third of the workers were organised, and where many organised workers did not have shop stewards representing them, claims concerning the strength and the extent of a rank and file movement of shop stewards must be cautiously made. The Charter was based in three main centres, in London, Liverpool and Manchester. But in two of these, that is in London and Manchester, it was only the largest sites which were well-organised and only in Liverpool has it been claimed that trade union organisation was effectively sustained (79). The Charter was weakened by the weakness of trade unionism in the industry itself. If it attracted a high proportion of activists, it did so in an industry where shop steward organisation was thinly spread. Whilst national officials opposed the extension of rank and file organisation in the major disputes of the 50's and 60's, they were equally prepared to use the Charter where it promised to reinforce organisation at the national level. As George Smith put it:

"If it is expected in the present situation that we have an attitude of amnesty about the Charter group or the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions and so on, let me say we do not mind where the support comes from as long as it is on our conditions (80).

How far can it be claimed that it was the Charter which led to a 'form of industrial unionism'? (81) Was it the agitation of the Charter group, or its predecessors which paved the way for the structural changes involved in the formation of UCATT? Like the NBL the Charter stood for 'industrial unionism' in the building industry in its programme and industrial unity, in practice, on the sites. Its emphasis on unity in action had real implications for militants concerned to organise and confront the employers at site level, but the question of structure

in the national arena was a less pressing concern. As with the NBL it was the campaign on wage issues which was the vital ingredient in its programme. In an industry which was notoriously tough, the movement built its support around a campaign which did not evade the problems of organisation and employer resistance. The question of structural adaptation was a topical one during the second half of the 1960's, but it was less effective as a campaigning issue than questions of wages, bonus, or the lump. It had been apparent throughout the decade that some measure of change was impending. By 1967 it was clear that this could no longer be postponed. The rank and file movements were operating within a climate where structural adjustments seemed to be inevitable. The loss of members and the extension of LOSC, the erosion of control of the national officers and the growth of the unofficial movements themselves were symptomatic of a crisis in trade union organisation. It was a crisis which was too serious to allow of further prevarication. Only the shape of structural changes remained to be decided.

### Pt.3: Structural Change

As in past decades, the rationalisation of trade union structure was encouraged by initiatives from the TUC. In 1960 there were 183 affiliated unions with a total membership of some 8,299,000 and the concern with multi-unionism was such that in 1962 a resolution was passed calling upon the General Council to examine the possibility of reorganising the trade union movement (82). The matter was referred to the F&GFC and in 1963 they reported that instead of attempting to draw up comprehensive plans for structural change, they would make ad hoc arrangements to assist the piecemeal mergers which were more likely to be effected. Technological changes had blurred craft distinctions

across many industries and conferences were held of union representatives within industrial groupings wherever it was felt that there was a possibility of reducing the number of unions (83). As far as construction was concerned initiatives went no further than the arrangements of conferences for unions in cognate trades. The resolution passed at the NFBTO conference in 1959 in favour of a review of structure had already turned attention towards the possibilities of merger and interest from the TUC served to encourage developments in this area.

The need for a legal framework which would facilitate the rationalisation of structure was part of the dilemma facing trade unions at this time. New legislation was introduced in 1964 to this end. It provided that, where merger was to be carried out on the basis of amalgamation only a 'simple majority of the votes recorded' be required from each amalgamating union (84). Elaborate provisions were made for the procedure governing amalgamation, and the general intention was to encourage mergers which might have failed to satisfy existing legal requirements. But merger was more often carried out by transfer of engagements than by a full amalgamation, and here too the Trade Union (Amalgamations) Act of 1964 simplified matters. Where previously two thirds of the merging union were required to vote and to produce a majority in favour now only a simple majority of those voting was required. Procedural arrangements similar to those governing a full amalgamation were laid down. The effect was to concentrate attention on merger discussions, since their outcome, if the question went to a ballot of the members, was more likely to be attended by success (85).

The interest of TUC officials in the rationalisation of trade union structure and the legislative initiatives which have been

described reflected a wider concern with the problems posed for managerial control by multi-unionism. The immutability of British trade union structure was contrasted with the enormous changes carried through in other parts of Europe and not uncommonly was identified by the press of the time with the problems of British industry. The Donovan Commission recognised the difficulties which would be associated with the complex task of completely restructuring the British trade union movement. Its recommendations followed those of the TUC insofar as they confined proposals to a limited tidying up operation, and rejected the notion of industrial unionism in the British context (86). There is evidence that outside interest in trade union structure generated some suspicion amongst trade union leaders, that it was intended to undermine the strength of their organisations.

'the subject of "rationalisation" of Trade Union organisation has been exploited in the Press by so many "industrial relations experts" that by this time we should be convinced the only possible development for the future will be the conversion of Trade Union organisation into a pale imitation of an Insurance Company'. (87)

Yet officials within the building trade unions accepted by the 1960's that a reduction in the number of unions in that sector was inevitable in the near future. Recognition of the need for mergers was encouraged by the climate of opinion in which multi-unionism, joint shop stewards committees and unofficial strikes seemed to be inextricably associated. The number of unofficial stoppages as a proportion of all stoppages in construction was high, although the number of workers involved in each stoppage was fairly low. And the industry had had its share of large,

well-publicised unofficial strikes in which union discipline had been called into question. (88). So, for those who were intent upon reasserting the authority of central control and of giving new life to the national machinery for collective bargaining, merger arrangements could seem to be advantageous. And they were encouraged in this view by the Donovan Commission, which singled out construction, together with engineering, for special comment in respect of potential mergers. In both areas, it was stated, there had been significant amalgamations in recent years. But 'a number of small but relatively powerful organisations have chosen to stay aloof. It seems to us that it would be practicable as well as useful to work towards the goal of one or at most two craft unions for the great bulk of craftsmen in both industries.' (89)

Discussions on rationalisation within the building trade unions were balanced by the moves toward centralisation on the part of the employers. Discussions within the NFBTE from the early 1960's took in questions of technical and research work as well as the administrative and negotiating machinery of that organisation. (90) By 1964 consideration was to be given to the formation of a single, unified body on the employers' side, and a working party was set up to consider possible changes in structure and organisation (91). The outcome, in 1969 was a document entitled Blueprint 1969 which pointed the way for modifications in structure which were introduced early in the 1970's (92). The awareness amongst union representatives of discussions on the employers' side on this issue provided a further incentive towards moves on their own behalf in regard to structural change.

External influences may have weighed heavily with trade union leaders in respect of mergers, but it was the crisis in their own membership returns which made rationalisation, at some level, inevitable. A major preoccupation for general secretaries of building trade unions over this period was the need to arrest membership decline and stabilise finances. In report after report the crisis in membership is outlined and although its effects may not have been spread uniformly between unions, it was apparent in nearly all of them.

It is impossible to estimate accurately the impact of this decline in membership on union density because of the difficulty of defining the number of workers 'employed' in each trade in construction over this period. Figures for workforce size in each trade have been taken from the Census of Population for earlier decades, and are based on the 10% sample from the censuses of 1961 and 1971. In view of the sensitivity of the question of 'labour-only' and the tax evasion associated with such activities it is uncertain how reliable these figures are. Yet it is clear that however inaccurate the following details may be, the general trend which is apparent from them was fundamental to considerations of merger. In almost every case trade union membership and density declined (93).

Trade union density in construction between 1961 and 1971

(Based on 10% sample).

1961

Trade	Membership	Labour force size	Density
Woodworkers	177,439	300,590	59.0%
Bricklayers & Masons	(83,954)		
1	73,954	253,220	38.5%
Painters <sup>2</sup>	71,981	335,850	21.4%
Plasterers <sup>3</sup>	16,890	47,340	35.7%
Plumbers	52,161	167,980	31.0%
Constr. Eng.	28,618	43,820	65.3%
Wood. Mach.	27,477	58,560	46.9%

1 It is assumed that 10,000 members of the AUBTW are labourers.

2 Joint membership of the Nat.Soc. Painters and the Scottish IS.

3 Joint membership of the NAOP and the SNOFU.

1971

Trade	Membership	Labour force size	Density
Woodworkers (Dec 1970)	163,345	294,120	55.53%
Bricklayers & Masons (Jun 1971)	57,172	160,870	35.5%
Painters (Dec 1969)	59,961	287,800	20.8%
Plasterers	11,000 (appr.) <sup>1</sup>	44,650	24.6%
Plumbers <sup>2</sup>	61,610	143,790	42.8%
Constr. Eng.		41,310	
Woodc/ Mach. <sup>3</sup>	23,000	52,520	43.8% (94)

1 Total craft section of building trade group of T&GW was 15,192, including NAOP & Scottish slaters. Assuming slaters remained static at pre-merger fig. of 2,000 then Plasterers

had over 11,000.

2. Figs supplied by C. Lovell, GS of Plumbers section of EETPU.
3. Figs supplied by FTAT.

Accurate estimates of the size of the 'lump' cannot be gauged for the construction industry as a whole, so they cannot be proffered in terms of its effects on individual trades. It was frequently noted that the bricklayers and the plasterers were earliest and most seriously affected by labour-only, but this does not mean that the other trades were exempt (95). By the mid-60's George Smith was emphasising the problems of membership decline. The scope and intensity of merger discussions was stepped up as officials endeavoured to confront the erosion of their organisational base with adjustments in union structure (96).

The financial situation of two of the three unions paralleled the crisis in membership. Within the AUBTW and the ASI&D the instability of the union was mirrored in the deficits from year to year. The AUBTW consistently operated at a deficit for the first half of the decade. In 1966 the situation was rectified and a small surplus was reported, but the advances were lost in 1967 when the deficit recurred. At the 40th National Del. Conf. the union's auditor warned that there was an 'unhealthy financial situation'. In order to remedy the situation extreme measures were taken during the following year. The National Delegate Conference was cancelled and was not reconvened until 1970. The education programme of the union was abandoned and officers and staff who left the service of the union were not replaced. Despite all of this the union recorded a surplus for 1968 of a mere £4,400 - a measure of the crisis in their

operations. The Painters were in a similarly serious position for their assets in Dec 1968 were smaller than they had been at the end of the 1950's - falling from £393,324.5.0 to £384,055.0.10. The loss was greatest at the beginning of the decade but there was a measure of stability after the merger with the Scottish Painters Society, which could not however lift the Painters back to the level which they had achieved in 1959. Within the Woodworkers the crisis was less marked. There was a deficit of some £25,000 in 1963 but a new contribution rate was introduced in order to strengthen the financial position. Between 1964 and 1969 this was reasonably healthy and a surplus was reported of income over expenditure in every year. It is apparent that the Bricklayers at least could not envisage the perpetuation of their individual existence for financial reasons alone, whilst for the Painters financial considerations were likely to be significant. By the end of the 60's two of these major unions in construction could not afford to pay the price for craft autonomy. (97)

Discussions on amalgamation saw three distinct phases during the decade. Firstly there were desultory negotiations following the initiatives within the FFBTO on the question of structure. Secondly there were talks between unions recruiting in cognate trades. And finally there were the discussions at the end of the decade which ended with the division of trade unionists in construction into two broad camps - on the one hand the craft based unions which were drawn into UCATT & FTAT and on the other, the general unions, which had long-standing rights of recruitment in the building industry, and who succeeded in attracting to their number a couple of the smaller, craft based societies.

General discussions on structural change took place between 1960 and 1962. Following the resolution passed at the NFBTO's annual conference in 1959 a working party was set up to study the problems and to report back to conference. Four meetings were held between 1960 and 1962 and it was agreed that the existence of so many unions recruiting within an area covered by one industrial agreement led to inefficiency, and a dissipation of valuable resources through duplication of efforts. The need for unification received, as it almost always did, widespread support, but there was considerable difference of opinion as to the way in which it should be achieved. The negotiators agreed amalgamation was a long-term aim, rather than an immediate possibility. In a decision which was reminiscent of many past discussions it was established that the most practical approach would be via discussions amongst cognate trades (97). The similarity between this and past decisions was no accident. It was clear that George Smith of the ASV clung to the policy of his predecessors who had for many years countered proposals for 'one Big Union' in the building industry with the need to pursue mergers between organisations recruiting amongst kindred trades, and had not changed. Ostensibly this derived from the fact that 'at least one third of our membership finds its employment outside the construction industry' (98). In practice it had more connection with the fact that the major woodworking unions represented a bigger and richer catch for the ASV than the other tradesmen in construction (99). Three groupings were set out as the basis for discussions; the woodworkers, the building section (comprising the painters and the general workers), and the metal trades. Extensive negotiations were pursued within the first two groups and their ramifications were important in moulding the shape of the 'one big union' which

finally emerged.

### The Woodworking Unions

There were three major organisations drawn together within negotiations on merger for the woodworking unions - the ASW, the ASWI and the NUFTO. Additionally there were four smaller societies; the Union of Basket, Cane and Fibre Furniture Makers, the Coopers' Federation, the United French Polishers Society and the National Union of Packing Case Makers. The first merger which was concluded linked the NUPCM to the ASW. Sam Reading had been GS of the NUPCM for over 10 years and during that time he had confronted the difficulties of sustaining a small organisation. The union was facing financial problems and its Annual Report for 1965 indicated that 'once again' there was a drop in total assets. The union's superannuation fund and the full-time officers' pension fund both showed a deficit and there seemed to be little prospect of reversing the downward trend. George Smith offered to take over the 5 full-time officials of the NUPCM, allowing permanent appointments to Sam Reading and his AGS. The NUPCM were to be allocated a position within the delegations to the TUC, IF and major negotiating bodies. The offer was too good to refuse and Reading hastened to transfer engagements into the ASW. The merger was conducted under the Act of 1940, during 1964 and so a two thirds vote in favour was required of the membership. Some 3,294 ballot papers were issued and 2,196 'yes' votes were needed in return. No closing date was stipulated and Reading successfully pulled in 2,118 votes - just 78 short of the statutory two-thirds. Finally he concluded that the vote could not be achieved. He appealed to the Registrar to allow the merger to be concluded despite the shortfall in the voting. Permission was duly given and the transfer was made on 1

January 1965 (100).

A first meeting of the larger woodworking group was held early in 1963, but because of the major dispute of that year it was not followed up, in any serious way, until a meeting was called under the auspices of the TUC in March 1964. (101) At that meeting George Smith, GS of the ASW, indicated that his union had, for many years, favoured merger with cognate trades. It was apparent at the outset that the other two large woodworking unions were not ready to abandon their autonomy in favour of merger along these lines. Indeed the ASWM leadership claimed to be bound by a resolution of their own annual conference in 1961 opposing amalgamation in any form, and it was clear from their contributions to discussions that they were unwilling to be assimilated in any take-over bid which might be made by George Smith. The GS of the NUFEO Alf Tomkins indicated a reluctance to accept merger via a transfer of engagements, although he suggested that proposals for merger into a new union would meet with a more positive reception (102).

The three unions were divided by fundamental questions of structure and political outlook. The ASW was the only one of the three to have a full-time Executive, and despite modifications to its district and management committee structure, it retained in essence, the form of organisation which it had adopted at its inception in 1921. By contrast the ASWM had a structure and political outlook more akin to the AUBEM than the ASW. It had a lay Executive of seven members, each one representing a geographical district, elected by the membership of that district for a period of three years. The supreme authority of the union was jointly vested in the EC and the annual conference, whose delegates were elected from the

districts. Elections took place by ballot within the branches and like the AUSTW they were a more radical body than the 'S' (103). The NUFTO was divided both into trade groups and into geographical areas. Its lay EC of 18 members was elected according to trade groups within a particular geographical area for a period of three years. The GS and the two assistant GS's were elected every five years by ballot of the whole of the membership. Organisers were elected both within trade groups and within the union's fourteen districts, outside of London, where district organisers were elected from within trade groups. The union's supreme authority was its biennial delegate conference, to which delegates were sent from branches. Otherwise voting was undertaken by postal ballot, with the ballot slip sent direct from the individual member to the scrutineer. The NUFTO's general secretary, Alf Tomkins had held office since 1942 and although in political outlook he was far from radical, his adherence to the structure of the NUFTO was not likely to assist the process of merger. A further meeting on trade union structure with respect to the wood-working trades was held at Congress House in May 1965 to consider the General Council's recommendation that the three main unions be asked to consider the possibilities of forming a single union. It was agreed in principle at that meeting that merger of the three bodies was desirable. But this went nowhere near to reaching the practical arrangements which were necessary if the principle was to become a reality (104).

Central to the problems regarding the projected amalgamation was the role and attitude of the general secretaries of the three organisations. George Smith, GS of the 'S' seems to have been committed to the notion of amalgamation between woodworking unions. Yet his manner and style of operation,

especially in relation to Alf Tomkins of the NUFTO, may not always have been such as to further progress in that direction. It was not simply that a personality clash could disrupt talks on merger. Rather it was the longer-standing rivalry between Smith and Tomkins which meant, at the outset, that the two men, both of them ambitious and capable of being blunt to the point of rudeness, were unlikely to trust each other in such a situation. Their past rivalry in respect of a seat on the General Council of the TUC (which was won by Smith) had soured relations, and there was nothing in the merger proposals which was likely to sweeten them (105). Smith, the younger man, could expect, as leader of the largest of the three unions, to assume the position of GS of any merged society which might be brought into existence. But Alf Tomkins, although now past retirement age showed no signs of retiring - and indeed the rules of the NUFTO did not set a retirement date for any of its officials (106). It was altogether unlikely that he would agree to a merger in which he took second place to Smith. Personality problems were less severe in relation to the GS of the ASWM, Charlie Stewart. A Scotsman, like Smith, he was on reasonably friendly terms with Smith. And since the ASWM required that its officials retire at the age of 65, Stewart's retirement was due in 1972 not too far distant and the moment might then seem to be auspicious for talks of fusion. But like the other General Secretaries Stewart was not immune from considerations of personal status and security. His position on the EC of the NFBTC, which was held with voting support from the ASW, the largest society in the Federation carried certain prestigious trips and financial inducements, and Stewart must have been aware that negotiations with the NUFTO in preference to the ASW might alienate this support from

the Woodworkers. Moreover it was well known that Stewart intended to return to Edinburgh on his retirement and it was likely that he would favour merger arrangements which would facilitate this move at an earlier date (107).

From 1965 until 1967 negotiations took place on a tripartite or a joint basis between these organisations. At some points all of them were meeting together, whilst at others discussions took place between two of the three parties. The responsibility for merger arrangements rested very much with the general secretaries of the three unions, often through informal meetings (108). The fact that there were three societies represented in the talks complicated matters, since it was apparent that any two of those unions, once consolidated, would represent a bloc against which the position of the third would be weakened. Both Tomkins and Smith pushed merger proposals which were likely to strengthen their own positions through the consolidation of their respective unions. And both of them put up proposals designed to capture the heart and the membership of the ASWM. Tomkins never moved far from the existing NUFTO rulebook which, because of its trade group structure, seemed to provide for the equitable representation of the different sections of a merged organisation (109). Moreover since Tomkins was already elected by all of the membership, the structure did not threaten his position, whilst it would work against a man who was known and supported from within only one or two of the trade groups. Smith was ready to accept a trade group structure provided it gave full weighting to the woodworkers which was warranted by their numbers - a move which would lend support to the continuation of his own position within the new union. The amalgamation was seen as the means

to revisions to the internal organisation of the ASW which could not hitherto be achieved. The scheme which was drawn up by Les Wood AGS of the ASW provided for regional organisation and the abolition of the District and Management Committee structure - moves which had failed in the bid for approval by the ASW membership in the early 50's. It was intended that methods advocated by the right wing of the ASW could be incorporated into the pattern of government of a merged society - postal ballots (which already operated within NUFTO) and the appointment of full-time officials (with the justification that this was necessary if all of the trades were to be represented at all levels) (110).

The NUFTO general secretary made more headway than Smith over the early period of negotiations with the ASWM, that is from the meeting at the TUC in May 1965 through until April or May 1967. The principal points concerning amalgamation were set out for consideration by February 1966 (111). By the end of that year negotiations appeared to be approaching a successful conclusion. A Trade Group for woodcutting machinists was to be established within the merged union, including all NUFTO machinists as well as existing members of the ASWM. The trade group was to have its own National Committee and National Secretary, and the existing ASWM EC would be added to the existing EC of the NUFTO, so that the new Executive would total 25 members. The ASWM had secured priority for their members in access to employment and generally the NUFTO GS indicated a willingness to compromise in order to assimilate the smaller organisation (112). It seems likely that Smith intervened to put an end to the proposals. As negotiations advanced during the summer of 1966 renewed initiatives on amalgamation were made from the ASW towards the NUFTO. This was done in two

ways. Firstly, through the offices of the TUC attempts were made to revive the tripartite discussions on merger. And secondly the ASWM (prompted most likely by the ASW) contacted the NUFTO EC to indicate that they would be willing to attend a joint meeting of representatives of all three unions (113). It seems likely that the GS of the ASW would be concerned, either to win one or both of the other parties for a larger merger, or at least to put an end to a merger which would exclude the ASW and thereby weaken their position for future amalgamation discussions in this direction. Provided that a merger between the NUFTO and the ASWM could be prevented the options for the ASW were still open. In view of the position of Charlie Stewart, as an EC member of the NFBTO, supported by the ASW, he was vulnerable to pressure from that quarter if he was to maintain his position. This it has been suggested is the explanation for the action of Stewart in curtailing negotiations in the Spring of 1967.

The consolidation of the Woodworking Unions was a priority for the GS of the ASW. It did not preclude a merger with unions in the building trades. But in view of their long standing problems within the AUBTW, amalgamation with the ASWM and the NUFTO took precedence over merger with the Bricklayers. There was little progress made on amalgamation between woodworking unions in the mid-60's. The most notable success was the transfer of engagements of the National Union of Packing Case Makers into the ASW on January 1 1965 (114). Otherwise the protracted discussions seemed to have reached an impasse. By 1967 the membership crisis could not be ignored. Its effects were more widely felt than within the woodworking unions alone, and in response to the threatened collapse of organisation in this sector, more wide-ranging and urgent talks were initiated.

## The Building Unions

Following the recommendations of the NFBTO's Working Party on Amalgamation that discussions should take place between unions recruiting in kindred trades, meetings were called of unions in the building and trowel trades. Seven unions were brought together - the AUBTW, the Amalgamated Slaters and Tilers (ASTRO), the Amalgamated Union of Asphalt Workers, the NAOP, the Scottish Slaters, Tilers, Roofing and Cement Workers, the Scottish Plasterers Unions and the National Society of Street Masons, Paviers and Roadmakers. The Amalg. Soc. of Painters and Decorators, who were represented at the first meetings were reluctant to be involved in this grouping, although they declared themselves to be generally in favour of amalgamation and so negotiations were confined to those unions listed above (115). Of these the AUBTW was by far the largest. With a membership of some 78,000 it numbered more than all of the others put together, and the major difficulty which it encountered was the feeling amongst representatives of the smaller unions that the discussions were about take-over rather than merger.

Lowthian, GS of the AUBTW was concerned to absorb within that union as many of the smaller societies as could be persuaded to accept amalgamation. The consolidation of the trowel trades promised to strengthen his bargaining position in merger talks with the ASW or the Painters and although initially an 'industrial union' was out of the question because the last two societies would not participate in negotiations, he proposed that a 'general union for building workers' could be established. This formula was loose enough to extend to the Woodworkers or the Painters if required, although it was raised at first in the context of discussions between the trowel trades (116). As a means of placating the sensibilities of the leaders of the smaller societies, who might feel that the interests of their

members would be ignored in the 'general union' it was proposed that trades groups be established. The main objectives during the months preceding the passage of new legislation on trade union amalgamation in 1964 seems to have been to continue discussions. Proposals to form a 'holding union' into which other unions might transfer were unlikely to reach fruition, when by a simple majority ballot in the smaller society a merger could be effected via a transfer of engagements from one society to another. It was clear that leaders of the AUBTW had no serious intention of renouncing their identity as the largest of the trowel trade unions in favour of a structure which would allow disproportionate weight to the views of other trades. As President of the TUC in the year that the statutory changes were made, Lowthian was clearly aware of their import. And from the time that they were passed the emphasis by AUBTW representatives within negotiations reverted to the question of a transfer of engagements, by the smaller unions into the AUBTW (118).

It was the Plasterers who were the most attractive of the smaller societies, as far as the AUBTW were concerned. Although their membership had suffered a drastic decline since the second world war, they still had some 11,844 members in 1965, and as such were the largest of the building group, apart from the AUBTW. Yet no agreement could be reached with them concerning arrangements for a transfer of engagements. The major problem was the right to representation on the EC of the AUBTW. The Plasterers claimed the right to three seats within a merged society, but the EC of the AUBTW offered only two. The national officers of the AUBTW were prepared to concede the point, but the union's Executive, especially Communist Party members on the EC, were reluctant to change

the number and political balance of their society to this extent (119). The officials of the AUBTW pursued the matter with the NAOP until August 1967, but by that time the dimensions of negotiations had been dramatically altered by the intervention of the T&GWU (120).

In the meantime the Scottish Plasterers Union had agreed to transfer their engagements to the NAOP from 1 Jan 1967 (121). The merger of the Scottish JCBI into the NJCBI for England and Wales encouraged the rationalisation of trade union structure within the three countries. The Scottish Plasterers Union was not large - they claimed some 3,960 members in 1965, but the transfer of engagements resulted in an enlarged organisation, covering England, Scotland and Wales, with a membership of around 13,000. The GS and the three full-time officials of the SPU were taken over within the merged society (122).

The reluctance of the Plasterers to subsume their identity within the AUBTW was not shared by the other small societies. Both the Street Masons and Paviers and the ASTRO merged into that union on the basis of transfer of engagements. In the case of the Street Masons and Paviers a ballot vote failed to produce the required majority in favour, but as a consequence of an enquiry held by the Registrar of Friendly Societies, a special dispensation was granted to allow the transfer to proceed. It was finally effected on 1 Jan 1967 (123). They were followed, on 31 Mar 1969 by the ASTRO, taking in an additional 2,000 members (124).

The Painters remained outside these discussions, since their

departure from the group in 1964. They had argued then that they were in the wrong group, since their interests were far closer to the woodworkers than to the trowel trade (125).

Both the ASW and the ASP&D had a substantial proportion of their membership in ship-building and repair. The Painters had a tradition of allegiance to, and alignment with the ASW. It was the painters who had benefited most from the Federation's old policy of one rate for the building industry, since it was they who were most likely to receive a lower rate. And it was the painters who most needed to assert their identity as craftsmen, who lined up beside the woodworkers whose craft status had not, in the past been called into question. A. Austin, GS of the Painters, could, on the one hand, declare his union's support for the principle of industrial unionism - a form of organisation which would draw together craftsmen and labourers into one, all-embracing union for their industry. And on the other he could cite the building trades group as inappropriate for his members, since it comprised unions recruiting labourers (126). The distinction between negotiating groups for woodworkers and for building, or trowel trades was a matter of concern insofar as it threatened to divide union members within the craft unions in construction into two camps, and on this basis the painters would not participate in the early round of discussions on amalgamation between cognate trade unions in the building and trowel trades. Austin was not enthusiastic about relations with George Smith, whose attitudes both personally and politically he found unattractive (127). But he was in any case precluded from opening serious negotiations with the ASW at this time because of their involvement in discussions with the NUFTO and the ASWM. The ASW EC would be unlikely to jeopardize negotiations with other wood-

working unions to associate itself with its poor relations in the ASP&D (128).

It was during this period that the ASP&D was successfully consolidated throughout England, Wales and Scotland. The Scottish Painters Society had retained their separate existence, and a membership of 12,000 until 1 January 1963 when they transferred engagements to the Amalgamated Society. Under the partial alteration to rules which was associated with this move the Scottish Executive Council assumed the status of Divisional Council within the merged structure. And the Scottish Society was allocated a seat on the Painters EC for the provisional period of one year after which their member, Danny Crawford, was successfully re-elected (129). The General Council too was enlarged to 11 members, providing 2 additional places for former members of the SPS (130). Politically the two societies were not dissimilar, since both had a small CP presence, represented within the Scottish society by two members out of ten on the union's lay Executive Council. And practically, affairs were facilitated by the degree of autonomy which seemed to be allowed to the Scottish Divisional Council. Difficulties arose after the merger, since there was inadequate provision made for relations between the Scottish Divisional Council, who were sensitive at the loss of their former position as an EC, and the Area Committee (131). But affairs were smoothed over by the liaison of the Divisional Committee and the national Executive, and in practice there was little that could be done by the Scottish leaders once the merger was completed. The enlarged society went on to absorb local organisations in Liverpool and Southport (132).

The schemes for amalgamation which were set in motion by initiatives from the NFBTO and the TUC in the early 60's were not conspicuously successful. Of the two major groups which have been considered here, there had, by 1967 been only partial successes within the building/trowel trades group, whilst the major societies within the woodworking group seemed to be as far apart as ever. If the period was important at all, it was in defining the problems of amalgamation. After the 1964 Act, General Secretaries of the various organisations had enormous power to set out and arrange support for alliances which required only a simple majority of members voting to cast their ballot in favour, in the case of the smaller society. Yet as long as there was no major decision taken, the situation remained fluid and parties to negotiations were reluctant to commit themselves to structures which they had so painstakingly set out on paper. The changes of this period did no more than consolidate the existing scope of organisations. The breakdown of the rationale behind craft organisation was threatened. But leaders of the craft societies were not about to commit personal or organisational suicide. It was intervention from another quarter which brought about their speedy demise.

### One Big Union?

It was the attentions paid to craft workers in construction from the T&GW's national headquarters at Transport House which pushed craft unions in that sector towards their hasty marriage of convenience. The threat of encroachment by the large general unions had been recognised from their inception and the Perth Agreement was concluded in order to provide for

jurisdictional arrangements between the craft and the general unions. The absorption of the NBL&CWS by the AUBTW in 1952 had jeopardized existing arrangements and was resented by officials of the T&GWU who felt that the craft unions were trespassing on their preserve. The breakdown of skills blurred the edges of craft distinctions, whilst the emergence of new specialised occupations widened the scope for recruitment into the general unions. By the early 1960's fears were expressed that the general unions might devour the craft organisations and a sense that the T&GWU in particular was looking for expansion in their direction concentrated the attention of craft officials on the matter of structural change (133).

The impetus for expansion, both through increasing membership and via mergers was boosted within the T&GWU by the arrival of Jack Jones at Transport House in 1963, when he assumed office as Assistant Executive secretary. From the days of Bevin the T&G had thrived on the policy of expansion through mergers, and the process was understood and encouraged by Jones during his time in office. Within the Building Trades Group, Les Kemp, the Group Secretary was an energetic character who worked to build the T&G's empire through two, parallel policies. Firstly recruitment within the craft area was stepped up and secondly approaches were made to a number of craft organisations in construction with a view to their transfer of engagements into the T&GW. (134) Within the EC of the ASW there was some concern at the moves by the T&GW into the field of craft organisation in competition with their own society (135). And there was a growing awareness that the difficulties facing the smaller societies would impel them

into amalgamation however much they might dislike the fact. 'Should this situation develop it will be the General Unions who will be coming to the rescue'. (136)

The decisive move was made by the leadership - and particularly by Albert Dunne, the General Secretary, of the NAOP. By the summer of 1967 it was apparent that talks between the NAOP and the AUBTW had made little progress. Approaches had also been made by the ASW and the Plasterers' Executive agreed to meet officials of the ASW for further discussions (137). Relations between Dunne and members of the ASW EC had been soured by events at the NFBTO conference in 1966. The death of Hugh Kelly, Gen. Sec. of the Plumbers Union, had left a vacancy for the position of Vice-President of the NFBTO. Two nominations were made for the position - Glyn Lloyd of the ASP&D and Albert Dunne of the Plasterers. Dunne was, at this time, the senior member of the Central (formerly the Executive) Council, but he failed to receive a majority in the election, and in consequence the post fell to Glyn Lloyd (138). Dunne's humiliation was completed by the election for the Federation EC. There were just 8 candidates for the 7 places, with Dunne the senior member of the retiring Executive. Clearly one of the candidates had to be defeated and it was Dunne who was at the bottom of the poll (139). The votes cast by the various unions are not recorded in the printed accounts of the Federation conference, but it seems that Dunne expected to receive the support of the ASW and that, as a result of machinations within their EC, this was not forthcoming (140). It is likely that his view of the craft organisations - and of the ASW in particular, was jaundiced by this event. Members of the ASW Executive suggested

that his disenchantment encouraged him to respond to initiatives from the T&GW regarding the establishment of a craft section within their Building Trade Group (141). The Plasterers could not hope to retain their autonomy for much longer in view of the severe financial problems from which they were suffering. By 1967 it was apparent that payment of the superannuation benefit to all of those who were currently members of that group might have to be suspended (142). The union had suffered especially badly from the effects of labour-only, and membership and financial stability were eroded as a result. It is not therefore surprising that when approaches were made by the T&GW concerning closer relations between the two organisations, they received a positive response from the Plasterers' Executive (143). Discussions proceeded rapidly and every effort seems to have been made, by T&GW officials, to bring them to a successful conclusion. Frank Cousins and Jack Jones personally met the Plasterers lay EC and promised to honour the payment of superannuation benefit and funeral benefit for widows of former members - a liability which, over the ensuing 10 years, was likely to be far in excess of the Plasterers' existing assets (144). Albert Dunne was made a national secretary (145) and it can be assumed that satisfactory arrangements were made for his retirement which was not too far off.

The outcome of the negotiations was the transfer of engagements of the NAOP to the T&GWU in 1968. The move was an important one for the T&GWU since it gave them for the first time a toe-hold within the craft ranks of construction. It represented a final breach with the principles of the Perth Agreement in that a Craft Section was set up within the T&G's Building Trades Group and henceforth that union formally

claimed the right to recruit amongst the skilled as well as semi-skilled and unskilled construction workers. It threw panic into the craft unions, where the new development was anything but welcome. If one craft organisation could accept a place within the largest general union - and the Plasterers Union was by no means the smallest of the trade societies - what would happen to the rest? Discussions were intensified in a bid to prevent complete capitulation to the T&GW. In the words of Jim Mills, President of the NFBTO in 1968:

'there is much more activity in this field than for some time ... events are taking place so quickly that it is very, very essential that we should close our ranks, and I am saying to this conference, will you please do all you can to see that we get closer together ... It does not need much vision on the part of the delegates present to see what the trend is at the moment, and the trend at the moment disturbs me considerably.' (146)

The trend was followed very rapidly by the Scottish Slaters, a small society (with only 2,250 members) which recruited more widely than their name suggested. Tommy McAlmont, their General Secretary, was a particularly able man, and it is not impossible that he was attracted by the prospects of improving his personal position with a society in which promises could be made regarding future appointments in a way in which they could not in an organisation where official position was achieved, at least in the first instance, by election (147).

T&GW officials were busy canvassing other unions with a view to picking off the smaller societies and isolating the ASW.

Approaches were made to the ASTRO and to the other unions which had been involved in negotiations with the AUBTW (148). The AUBTW Executive, concerned at these developments, approached both the ASW and the ASP&D and the NUFTO asking for informal discussions on the question of closer unity to counter the initiatives from the T&G (149). It was clear that the T&GW was widening the scope of its recruitment in an attempt to build its craft section and disputes between unions connected with appropriate spheres for recruitment were taken to the TUC disputes machinery as a consequence (150).

Matters were complicated by the political differences which prevailed within the craft unions. Leaders of those unions were unlikely to seek a home within the ranks of the large general unions. For the general secretaries whose retirement was not imminent, there was a reluctance to accept the loss of status which might be involved in a move to a union which was so much larger than their own. Communist Party members revised their views on amalgamation in response to the 'left face' taken by leaders of the T&GWU. The repudiation of the 'black circular' which prohibited members of the Communist Party from holding full-time positions with the organisation encouraged the view that a move to the T&GW might be advantageous, but attitudes varied according to the prevailing outlook of the union in which Communist Party members were located. A merger with the T&GW was a different proposition for a Communist member of the AUBTW than it was for Communists within the ASW. Further attention will be given to the influence of political attitudes on the process of structural change within the mergers which went to make up the UCATT. But it is apparent that, as far as the T&GW were concerned, the identification of Jones with the 'left' was a factor which encouraged a new

interest from that direction in amalgamation into the T&GW.

Jack Jones also hoped to win over the Constructional Engineering Union, a body which retained an unusually stable membership by contrast with the other building trade unions. The two unions had been in direct competition for scaffolders for many years, and amalgamation would have resolved the conflict over recruitment in this area (151). It was partly because of that conflict that leaders of the CEU preferred to negotiate with the AEUF. An agreement was reached which provided formally for amalgamation but which allowed the CEU to retain a considerable measure of autonomy in the conduct of its affairs. The Foundry Workers had already been associated with the AEU in a similar arrangement and in 1970 the CEU was attached to the AUEF as a distinctive grouping known as the Construction Section. This was only a semi-merger and the CEU retained a substantial measure of autonomy. Politics played a part in the merger for the leadership of the CEU were on the left, and favoured a merger with the AEU where Hugh Scanlon was then General Secretary. But insofar as the choice was between two unions both of which claimed a left leadership, the issue was decided with reference to past hostilities between the CEU and the T&GWU. (152)

Just before the CEU transferred engagements into the AUEF, the Plumbers Trade Union merged with the Electrical Trades Union to form the Electrical Electronic Telecommunication and Plumbing Union. Both the ETU and the PTU were on the fringes of the building trades, with a substantial proportion of their members in other areas. The first moves towards amalgamation had taken place in 1963, when informal discussions were held between Dave Fraser, an Executive member of the Plumbers and Frank Chapple,

of the ETU. The PTU was a craft-based organisation, which had opened up membership to labourers, only in the 1950's. Like other craft-based unions in construction the Plumbers organisation had been undermined by the 'lump' and rates negotiated at national level had ceased to be relevant to earnings. They were affiliated to the NFBTO on the basis of roughly 30,000 members and their GS, Hugh Kelly had for several years been its President. The Plumbers had two seats on the NJCBI and like the other building trades they were committed to the principle of one craft rate (153).

The ETU had abandoned that principle, following internal upheavals which led to the Communist dominated Executive being ousted in the early 60's for ballot rigging. The new, right-wing leadership confronted the chaotic situation within the electrical contracting industry by reformulating bargaining arrangements and wage structure, creating three grades of skill each with its corresponding rate (154). Amalgamation with the ETU meant for the Plumbers, acceptance of the right-wing political orientation of that union and endorsement of the new approach to wage bargaining which broke with the longstanding principle of the one craft rate. Both unions had a full-time EC, with 5 members in the PTU and 11 members in the ETU. Merger was effected on the basis of a full amalgamation, requiring a ballot of members of both unions and the creation of a new rule-book. The new union provided for an enlarged Executive comprising all of the former Executive Councillors of the ETU as well as the GS Charlie Lovell, and two EC members of the Plumbers, other members of the EC of that union having retired. All EC members were to be full-time officials and held office for a period of five years. The provisions of the new union were designed to

centralise control and authority and to create a body of full-time officials which owed its allegiance essentially to the EC. A novel feature of the amalgamated union was the provision that full-time officers - organisers and officials at national and area level should be appointed by the EC after September 22 1969. Previously officials in both unions had been subject to election and to regular re-election (155). Chapple had consistently advocated the appointment of officials and the amalgamation provided him with the opportunity of implementing this change. The rules incorporated the existing provision of the ETU rulebook that full-time officials should not be members of the Communist Party. Not surprisingly the left was opposed to a merger which promised to place power firmly and permanently with the right-wing leadership of the ETU. Although a measure of autonomy was allowed for trade purposes through the medium of a national Electrical Committee and a national Plumbing Committee it was clear that it was the EC of the EETPU, led by the GS which would have authority on key issues of government and policy. The amalgamation was opposed by the left in both unions. The Communist Party was influential in certain districts within the PTU - in London, Glasgow, Dundee and Liverpool, although the right wing could count on support from Yorkshire and East Anglia. In the ETU the left had suffered major setbacks only a few years earlier because of ballot rigging by Communists, but there was still a strong left-wing base from which opposition to the merger could be sustained. In practice the leadership had only to win a simple majority of those voting for amalgamation to proceed - not a difficult proposition for a union leadership which had all of the publicity machinery of the organisation at its disposal. A sizeable majority in favour of amalgamation was recorded within the PTU, but in the ETU the amalgamation was approved, by only a slim margin (156).

The large vote against amalgamation was fundamentally a vote against the impending centralisation. Nevertheless the statutory requirements had been observed and amalgamation could proceed. The EETPU came into being in June 1968 with a total membership of over 350,000. The PTU continued its affiliation to the NFBTO until 1971, but subsequently adjusted its bargaining arrangements in line with the precedent set by the ETU. The new union was founded on the basis of a right-wing political identity and an internal machine which vested power in the hand of the leading officials and Executive members. Its bargaining practice broke with the traditions of the one craft rate. The electricians and the plumbers had consolidated their position in a way which set them apart from the building trade unions.

The Painters made the first significant move towards a wider amalgamation. Following the declaration of their GS that they did not wish to participate in merger discussions with the Bricklayers' group in 1964, informal talks were initiated with the ASW (157). The leadership of that union was preoccupied at this time by negotiations with the other woodworking unions, who represented a far richer catch than the Amalg. Soc. of Painters and Decorators. Negotiations proceeded in a desultory fashion through 1966 and the early months of 1967. A joint meeting of the two Executives was held in April 1966 in which it was agreed that closer unity or fusion of the two organisations was possible, and this was followed up with a further joint meeting in which a more detailed comparison of the two rulebooks was made (158). It was not until the breakdown of talks between the woodworking unions, and the initiation of talks between the NAOP and the T&GWU that attention was concentrated, within the ASW EC, on the possibilities of concluding

a merger with the painters. Between June 1967 and May 1968 several meetings were held and consideration was given to the detailed matters which must be decided before fusion could be effected (159). The progress of negotiations by 1968 was reflected by the presence of A. Austin of the Painters on the platform of the ASW conference and by the end of the year a statement of intent had been agreed for publication (160).

The ASP&D transferred its engagements to the ASW on 1 Jan 1970. This meant that the ASP was assimilated into the ASW on the basis of the Woodworkers' existing rules, with alterations merely to provide for the incorporation of the administrative machinery of the smaller union. The ASP&D was to hand over its entire assets to the Woodworkers, and the whole of its membership would be transferred to that union. Members of the ASP&D could opt to continue paying their existing contributions, or they could accept payment and benefits on the basis of the provisions of the ASW rulebook, but this decision had to be made within one year of the transfer. Thereafter entrance could be solely on the basis of the ASW rulebook. All members of the ASP&D, on transfer, would have credited to them their membership of that union, such that they would not be disadvantaged by the transfer. It was accepted that branches of the Painters and Decorators would continue to function, although wherever it proved administratively practicable small groups of painters and decorators might be accepted into branches of woodworkers. The ASW guaranteed that the Painters would continue to be represented on such bodies as the NFBTO, the TUC, and at the Labour Party conference. It was also accepted that full-time officers of the Painters would continue to function after the transfer on terms no less favourable than those on

which they were currently employed, their numbers to be adjusted over time by natural wastage. Key office staff were retained, and the ASP&D Trust Deed Pension Fund was to be honoured, where this was preferred to the ASW's Retiring Allowance Fund. (161) As regards provision for the ASP&D on the governing bodies of the merged society, it was established that the five members of the full-time EC of the Painters at the date of transfer should become members of the EC of the ASW, but that they should not be replaced until the number of painters on that body was less than three, as a result of retirement, resignation or death. The General Secretary of the ASP&D was to hold office as secretary of the Painters and Decorators Section of the ASW, to be followed on his retirement by the Assistant General Secretary (162).

Both structurally and politically, the transfer of engagements of the ASP&D into the ASW was straight forward. Both unions had full-time Executive Councils; both were subject to decisions of policy making conferences (163); and both had an existing structure of area or district and management committees. The ASP&D was well endowed with officials, but numbers would diminish through retirement. Officials of the Painters' union were unlikely to suffer by the process, firstly since they could expect their pay and conditions ~~to~~ be brought into line with their more affluent colleagues ~~in~~ the ASW, and secondly because the ASW pension scheme was superior to their own (164). A. Austin, the General Secretary, was on the brink of retirement and so there was no contestant from the Painters for senior office within the new union. And it proved possible to expand the General Council to include both Woodworkers and Painters. The Painters had always pictured the joiners as being stronger

industrially, than they were themselves, and there was no fear, amongst the leadership of that union that they could not get the deal accepted. Its success depended, ultimately, on the fact that it did not operate to their personal disadvantage.

Yet George Smith and the leadership of the ASW took the opportunity to revise their structure in accordance with past proposals for constitutional reform. This move had nothing to do with the amalgamation as such, and everything to do with the consolidation of power in the hands of the union's Executive Council. Regionalisation had long been the aim of the ASW's general sec, and EC. It preceded Smith and his colleagues, but it had been adopted by them as a means of undermining the autonomy of the Management Committees whose independence was often maintained at the expense of the union's central authority. New proposals for a regional structure, reminiscent of those which had been brought forward in the late 40's, were put to the membership late in 1969. They were not approved and George Smith decided to hold a second ballot, to include members of the ASP&D who had, by now voted to transfer engagements to the ASW. (165) The second ballot went in favour of regionalisation - by 16,237 votes to 14,175. The effect was to abolish the old district and management committees, which provided an alternative power base for activists from the sites. In their place were established twelve Regional Councils, which were to meet only once every six months, elected from divisions within the region. A Regional Committee was elected from the Regional Council to meet on a monthly basis. Biennial conferences were to replace the union's annual delegate conference, and a regional conference was to alternate with the full delegate conference. Regional secretaries were to be appointed by the EC

(166). Insofar as the process of regionalisation was associated with the amalgamation of the Painters and the Woodworkers, members of the ASW were given no opportunity to counter the proposals, or the inclusion of painters in the ballot, since the merger was carried out on the basis of transfer of engagements. And voting on the transfer by the painters had, in any case been completed before the second vote on regionalisation (167). The Regional structure strengthened the hold of the EC over the activists at local level, through their influence with regional secretaries. Their influence with regional organisers too was strengthened, since the latter were permanently confirmed in their position after their second election to office and were therefore less reliant on the membership. The new structure carried with it, as it was intended to do, the means of weakening the influence of activists on site, whose power base had been located in the District and Management Cttees. And in doing so it gave a new boost to the central authority of the union's Executive Council.

Politically the new structure, both the incorporation of the ASP&D and the associated process of Regionalisation, asserted the influence of the right wing. The EC of the Painters, like that of the ASW were solidly on the right although the CP were an established presence within the London DC. There had been differences of opinion within the Painters, which had resulted in a number of legal battles with the Communist Party and it is not surprising that the CP members in the ASP&D provided unenthusiastic about the merger. The prospect of transferring engagements into the ASW was contrasted with the possibility of merger into the T&GWU. Justifications were made by reference to the lower contributions and the more efficient services provided by the T&GW (168). But behind the arguments

lay an awareness that merger with George Smith and the EC of the Woodworkers promised to create a coalition of right wing forces which might make the voice of the Communist Party almost inaudible. The question of regionalisation was already under consideration during the summer of 1969, when the fusion of the ASP&D and the ASW was being negotiated. There was some awareness of the implications, in terms of the erosion of the influence of district - or in the case of the ASP&D, Area Committees. And this encouraged the feeling that the merger would represent the coming together of two union bureaucracies at the expense of the members (169). Most important to the attitude of Communist Party members within the ASP&D was the prevailing feeling within the CP that Jack Jones, together with Scanlon, represented the progressive face of British trade unionism. For CP members, the desire to ally themselves with progressive elements was stronger, at this point in time, than rhetoric in favour of unity of the building trades unions, and attempts were made to resist the movement towards the ASW, both by campaigning at the union's conference, and through legal consultations designed to show up defects in the procedure adopted for balloting members (170). Neither method was successful and on 1 Jan 1970 the ASP&D transferred engagements to the ASW.

At the same time as the members of the Painters and Decorators Society were balloting on the question of merger with the ASW, so were those of a much smaller, professionally based society, the Association of Building Technicians. The ABT was founded in 1919, as the Architects and Surveyors' Assistants Professional Union, an organisation for salaried, architectural and surveying staffs. A relatively specialist society, it had particular

problems concerning the maintenance of members and organisation. Firstly it recruited in offices employing only a small number of eligible staffs, so that recruiting was difficult and servicing the membership proved costly (171). There was no central body of employers with whom the Association could negotiate, and it proved impossible to represent members in their diverse employment situations, with the limited resources which were available. The TUC had shown concern at the number of unorganised salaried employees in construction, and it was argued that merger with the ASW might encourage their recruitment. It was proposed to the ABT that they transfer engagements to the ASW to provide a special section within that union catering for professional and technical workers in construction. The existing GC and EC of the ABT would retain their position within the section, which would have a considerable measure of autonomy. Essentially the ABT was to retain its corporate existence within the larger union and would be responsible for its own affairs, with the exception of administration and finance (172). The General Secretary of the ABT, as the officer responsible for the Section, would attend meetings of the ASW's EC, in order to provide close links and co-ordination between the two, and it was agreed that he should be paid at the same rate and afforded the same facilities as EC members, including membership of the ASW Retiring Allowance Scheme. Members of the ABT were eligible to be represented at the Society's Annual Delegate Conference on the basis of one representative for each 5,000 members (173). These proposals received the necessary endorsement from the members of the ABT and in 1970 that organisation transferred its engagements to the ASW.

As rumours and reports of the involvement of the Plasterers with the T&GW were circulated during the summer of 1968, so general secretaries and Executive Council members of the construction unions reviewed the pattern of past negotiations on the question of amalgamation. It was in this climate that the General Secretary of the AUBTW was instructed by his EC to write to the ASP&D, to the ASW and the NUFTO requesting informal conversations on the question of closer unity (174). As far as the AUBTW were concerned, the major problem in their connection with the ASW was a decision as to what types of merger should be discussed. George Smith made it clear at the outset that he favoured a transfer of engagements. Whilst he was prepared to conduct further and wider discussions, 'because of decisions being taken elsewhere speed in carrying through a merger is of vital importance.' (175) The strength of craft identity and the need to allow a degree of autonomy if amalgamation was to be successfully concluded were recognised, but Smith's opening offer of a ratio of two full-time officials of the AUBTW to five full-time officials from the ASW on a national Executive Council (this of course is prior to the conclusion of merger with the Painters) was hardly designed for its instant appeal (176). The ASW proposals for a transfer which were brought forward in October '68 were unacceptable to the EC of the AUBTW and there followed two years of long and complex negotiations.

The merger of the AUBTW and the ASW was hindered both by the structure and the prevailing political outlook within the two organisations. The ASW, with its full-time Executive, its lay General Council and District and Management Committees, had very different traditions from the AUBTW. That union's lay Executive and Divisional Councils and District Committees could

not readily be assimilated into the organisational framework of the Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers. Proposals and counter-proposals were necessary if some degree of compromise between the conflicting patterns of government were to be found. In July 1969 the EC of the AUBTW submitted proposals in which they claimed three seats on the Executive Council, as a permanent proposition, with the AUBTW's GS included in an advisory capacity on that body, and the method of election to be determined by the EC of the AUBTW. A National Trade Group for bricklayers was to be set up, following the existing divisional pattern of the AUBTW, with a considerable degree of autonomy in recruitment and policy (177). But the pattern of negotiations was changed by the prospective merger of the ASW with the ASP&D. And the political differences between the ASW and the AUBTW lent a new dimension to negotiations on the aims and mechanics of merger.

There was a strong Communist Party presence within the EC of the AUBTW which was not to be found to the same extent in other unions. CP members in the AUBTW, like their comrades in the Painters were suspicious of a merger with a union such as the ASW, dominated by a right-wing, ex-Communist. It was felt in some quarters that George Lowthian, their own GS, was seeking allies against the left in his own union by talking merger with George Smith (178). CP members were more inclined to favour a transfer into the T&G where the shift to the left promised them a more receptive home. In accordance with the best traditions of merger campaigns, they mobilised, not around the question of whether or not a merger with the ASW should proceed, but of the terms on which such a merger ought or ought not to be conducted (179). Firstly, it was argued that transfer of engagements was not an appropriate means of pursuing merger,

since it removed the democratic rights of expressions of members of one of the unions involved. Moreover it threatened to abolish the framework of organisation on which the AUBTW had been built and which had proved relatively amenable to the presentation of 'progressive policies' (180). It was from the branches and the districts, and especially through the National Delegate Conference that their campaign was launched. In July 1970 a circular opposing the merger was sent out from Barking and Dagenham branch, where CP influence was strong. And at the National Delegate Conference in the same year, a resolution was moved and successfully carried supporting amalgamation, but stating that it must be effected

'in such a manner as to ensure the highest possible degree of membership participation and democracy and the preservation of the best traditions of the merging parties. Conference therefore opposes current negotiations with the ASW as the terms of reference for the transfer of engagements by the AUBTW to that body'... (181)

But attitudes towards the amalgamation, even within the CP, were not uniform. They were defined by the varying trade union situations in which members found themselves, and the result was a conflict within the CP over the question. Many Party members within the ASW and the ASP&D were in favour of the merger with the AUBTW, since they recognised that it would help in the fight against the right wing in their own unions (182). Within the AUBTW however, there was sharp opposition, although even here a minority gave support. Resistance to the merger from the left within the AUBTW - especially within that union's EC, prolonged negotiations as they spelled out the political implications of structural change. All of the EC members of the AUBTW had an interest in ensuring that their organisation was

well represented within the EC of the merged societies, not least because some of them could expect to take up full-time office as a result. For the Communist members there was the additional concern that, for political reasons, they should be amongst those who were appointed to the new EC. By September 1969 George Smith and the ASW representatives within negotiations had conceded that the AUBTW should have five seats on the EC of the new organisation (the increased number corresponding to arrangements made for the Painters), but required that three of these should be taken by the GS, the AGS and the President, none of whom were Communists (183). The AUBTW responded by claiming that of the five seats, only the President and the GS, of existing officers, should be included with three members of their existing EC (184). This was agreed by the ASW, but it did not resolve the thorny problem of who, out of the existing EC should be selected. Opposition to the merger was sustained, by CP members, outside of the EC throughout 1970, whilst within it the battle was fought over who was to move to the new Executive. Within the Communist Party there must have been some bad feeling on the question, since politically it made sense to choose younger members, whose retirement was not imminent. On these grounds a man such as Bill Smart, who had been active since the early days of the NBL, could not expect to be included. The selection of the AUBTW representatives on the new EC was made by ballot of the existing EC members and two of the three incumbants - Hugh D'Arcy and Albert Williams, were members of the CP; the third nominee being Doug Sanderson (185). On the GC too the Communist Party was represented - Bros. Lowe and Smart were selected, both were from the CP, together with Bro. Cassidy. The Communist Party presence within the EC of the AUBTW had ensured that merger could not

proceed without concessions being made in their direction. If the transfer of engagements of the AUBTW into the ASW&P (as it was known after the merger of the Painters) appeared as the consolidation of right wing elements within all of the unions involved, it could not proceed without significant concessions being made to the left in terms of their representation on the new Executive.

It was in the light of these concessions that the merger could be concluded against a background of opposition from rank and file activists. The decision of the AUBTW National Delegate Conference in 1970 to oppose amalgamation with the ASW on the present terms was given no further consideration, since Lowthian insisted that the matter was one for membership decision, and that resolutions by conference could not resolve the issue (186). A key factor in swinging the membership towards the merger was the personal interest of full-time officers. Wages of these officials in the AUBTW were low relative to other organisations and they had smaller cars. Although the AUBTW had a pension scheme for its officials which was as good as that which was operating within the ASW, they were told that more generous provisions would be introduced after merger. The Divisional Secretaries, who were top men in the existing structure, could not expect a similar status within the new union, yet they would be well compensated by their increased income (187). Almost without exception the Divisional Secretaries opted to support the amalgamation - and their support through meetings and personal contact was key to winning the vote for a transfer. It was only in one region, in the Eastern Counties, that the Divisional Secretary, a man who 'thought AUBTW', opposed the transfer. And it was in this region alone that an adverse vote

of the membership was recorded on the question (188).

When UCATT was formed in July 1971 it took over the funds and the membership of the AUBTW, although there was an option, for AUBTW members, of continuing to pay existing rates, for the existing benefits of the AUBTW, as opposed to transferring to the ASW table of payments, the decision on this matter to be made within 6 months of the transfer being completed. All members of the union were to have their period of membership credited to them for benefit purposes and branches were to continue to function, although arrangements were to be made for the amalgamation of branches and for the entry of bricklayers into existing branches of woodworkers. The fundamental differences in branch administration necessitated retaining the existing system of administration of AUBTW branches for an interim period until adjustment could be made to a single, centralised procedure. Provision was made for the representation of the AUBTW on any outside bodies to which they were already affiliated - for example on the TUC and the Labour Party, and it was agreed that District Cttees and Divisional Councils should continue to function for a period of not less than twelve months, but Divisional Offices of the AUBTW were to be closed as soon as possible after the amalgamation, and full-time officials were to be based at the offices of the ASW. As with every transfer of engagements it was laid down that no full-time officer was to suffer a deterioration in his condition as a result of the merger. It was confirmed that five seats were allotted to the AUBTW on the EC of the new organisation - two seats to be taken by existing national officers of that union, although Lowthian left his position for the AGS, Bill Lewis, and opted instead for a position as

secretary of the national section for the remainder of his period in office. It was further agreed that the two national officers would not be replaced and it was expected that within five years the AUBTW's representation on the Executive would be reduced so that not less than three seats would be allocated to them. Provision was made for an Administrative Committee for the section for the ensuing five year period, to comprise the existing EC members of the AUBTW, and a compensatory payment was to be made to them, in proportion to their period on the EC, for loss of office. Three seats were allocated to the AUBTW on the General Council. Branch officers were protected from a loss of income by the provision that payments would continue to be made on a basis not less favourable than that which already applied. (189) Significantly there was no provision made for AUBTW representation within the new Regional Structure. Voting on this question had twice taken place - the first time within the membership of the ASW, the second time within the members of both the Woodworkers and the Painters' Societies, and there was no move made to involve the AUBTW in a decision of this kind, most probably because their members might be expected to swing the vote against the project for regionalisation. AUBTW members were incorporated into a structure on which they had expressed no opinion and it is interesting to note that no special attempts seem to have been made, by the AUBTW's negotiators on amalgamation to ensure that this structure should subsequently provide a forum for the expression of their opinions. Concern was concentrated on representation at Executive level, and by comparison, craft representation on regional bodies was neglected.

The ballot on the transfer of engagements was successfully concluded early in 1971; and the Union of Construction Allied

Trades and Technicians came into being on 1 July 1971 (190). The formation of UCATT consolidated craft interests in construction. It drew together the three largest craft unions under the umbrella of the ASW Rulebook as a means of consolidating the financial interests of all of these bodies. 'It wasn't a marriage of love, it was a marriage of convenience' (191) and arguments over the dowry were cut short by the threat of a rival suitor in the person of the T&GWU. The new union followed the logic of the existing pattern of trade union organisation in construction, to the extent that its membership was concentrated in occupations with a craft tradition. This was achieved in defiance of political differences which separated the AUBTW from the ASW and the ASP&D. It could be achieved because of the ability of George Smith and the right wing in these unions to split the political unity of the left, and to win Communist Party members in leading positions within the AUBTW over to arguments about CP & AUBTW representation within the EC of the merged society, and away from concern with 'democratic procedures and ... progressive policies' (192).

The long-standing antipathy between the ASW and the AUBTW had, finally, been submerged. George Hicks' aspirations towards a greater amalgamation were realised. Merger between the Woodworkers and the Bricklayers vindicated the long-standing identification of the AUBTW with the 'one big union'. Yet it was clear that industrial unionism was no longer a realistic objective and Lowthian at least was aware that the new organisation could not be easily classified in this way. The 'one big union' did not have the significance which its advocates had attributed to it in earlier years. Where the rhetoric of industrial unionism was employed during the ballot on merger this was intended merely to smooth the path for a speedy con-

clusion to negotiations. Advocates of merger were obliged to counter the equally entrenched hostility to the Woodworkers which prevailed amongst members of the AUBTW. This hostility was as much a part of the radical tradition within the AUBTW as was support for an industrial union. The leadership of the Woodworkers stood for a conservative, closed craft approach to trade unionism. Opposition to the Woodworkers and resistance to their influence within the NFBTO was identified with the views of the political left. Such divergent views could be reconciled in practice only by a change in the leadership of the ASW. This was not of course the basis on which the transfer was effected, and in practice no such reconciliation was possible. Whilst Lowthian and other supporters of amalgamation could draw on the progressive and syndicalist traditions to support their case, their opponents could draw on the continued hostility to the conservative attitudes of the Woodworkers.

The amalgamation of these three major craft organisations in the building industry suggested that the leadership of the ASW had abandoned their long allegiance to the principle of amalgamation between cognate trades in favour of merger with other building trade unions. It would perhaps be more accurate to suggest that George Smith had revised the existing policy of the ASW, in the light of membership and financial problems, towards amalgamation of building and woodworking unions. The continuation of Tomkins as GS of the NUFTO, and his acrimonious relations with Smith, precluded advances in that direction, but negotiations were pursued with the ASWM until 1971.

For a brief period, in the Spring of 1971, it seemed as though Smith might consolidate his position as GS of an enlarged

union of building and woodworkers. Despite a deterioration in relations between his own EC and Charlie Stewart, in relation to ASW support for Lowthian's - as against Stewart's potential candidature for the position of Vice President of the NFBTO in 1969, negotiations between the two societies were pursued through 1970 and by January 1971 a sub-committee was established to finalise details of a merger (193). Once again the GS of the ASWM was using the rival attentions of the NUFTO and the ASW to increase the bidding for his union's favours. And as soon as it seemed that negotiations with the ASW were nearing a successful conclusion, the news was leaked to the NUFTO, who promptly responded with a renewed offer (194). The involvement of the ASW with the ASP&D and the AUBTW did not increase its attractions for Stewart and his Executive. The financial difficulties of the two last-named organisations were well known, and for the ASWM, itself a relatively wealthy organisation, the move may not have seemed advantageous. Moreover it was unlikely that the ASW would make concessions to the ASWM, comparable to those already made to the Painters and those offered to the Bricklayers. They were offering only one seat on the merged EC to the ASWM, compared with the five already allowed to the ASP&D. Tomkins then came up with an offer which the ASWM could not refuse. The whole of the ASWM EC would be incorporated into a new EC in a merger with the NUFTO. There would be a Trades Group for all Woodworking machinists, with the existing GS of the ASWM as secretary and all NUFTO woodworking machinists transferred into this group. Satisfactory arrangements were made for the imminent retirement of Stewart, and on this basis agreement was reached in May 1971 for the ASWM to transfer engagements to the NUFTO (195). By this stage the ASW leadership was caught within the frame-

work of the existing mergers. An alliance with the Painters and the Bricklayers permitted the formation of UCATT as a union for almost any tradesman within the field of construction. But the size and scope of the new society made it correspondingly difficult to incorporate the much smaller ASWM, without encouraging the feeling amongst the leaders and members of that union, that they were yet one more string to the ASW bow.

#### The demise of the NFBTO

The renewed attention to amalgamation from 1960 ensured that interest in the structure and functions of the NFBTO was revived. The government of the Federation had not changed significantly in the post-war era, but in the context of the impending financial crisis in its affiliated unions, critical glances were cast on that body's expenditure and activities. The retirement of Dick Coppock removed an almost insuperable obstacle to change. Whilst Weaver was a competent and conscientious general secretary he lacked the stature which accrued to Coppock, by virtue of his age and personality. Moreover he was constrained by the amendments which had been made to NFBTO rules in respect of his own election and he was less able to resist the erosion of his own, and of Federation power.

It was the general secretary of the ASW, George Smith, who was responsible for initiating changes in the organisation of the NFBTO. The reasons for his moves in this direction were three fold. Firstly he was concerned to establish that he, and not the GS of the NFBTO was the decisive influence in trade union affairs in the construction world. Secondly it continued to be apparent that the ASW was the largest source

of income for the NFBTO, and the crisis in membership and finance which affected the ASW, like the other unions, encouraged its leaders to look around for areas of expenditure which might be cut. Finally he was concerned to ensure that in the context of changes in technology and government policy, where control of the membership was slipping away from the Federation leaders, that it was ASW policy which remained paramount (196).

Moves for a revision of the constitution were brought forward at the annual conference of the NFBTO in 1964. Four major proposals were made. Firstly it was suggested that the General Council be replaced by a Control Commission, comprising the joint Executives of affiliated unions, which should meet quarterly in order to take decisions and give instructions to the Executive. Secondly that the cost of sending delegates to this body be borne by individual unions, and not by the NFBTO. Thirdly, in line with past suggestions of the ASW (197) that instead of the existing affiliation fees there should be a graduated scheme with a basic minimum payment which should be met by any organisation. And finally it was suggested that one quarterly meeting of the new Control Commission would be designated the Annual Conference, for the purpose of carrying through the election of the EC, of Federation Officers and the Standing Orders Committee (198).

These provisions were designed to adjust the structure of the NFBTO to the realities of ASW authority within the Federation. As George Smith pointed out there was no provision within the constitution of the Federation for the meetings of the Joint Executives which for many years had taken the key decisions. These meetings had been held under the auspices of the

Federation, and were organised and financed by that body. Indeed Coppock had used his control over financing and expenses through the Federation to expedite business and enhance his personal influence over the decisions which were reached (199). Since the ASW was the major contributor to Federation funds George Smith was able through revision of these arrangements to economise on those funds and at the same time to reduce the authority of the Federation. If unions were responsible for payment of expenses to their own delegates control over the rate at which expenses were claimed might be tighter, and, for unions with a large Executive and a small membership, the relative cost would be high. Moreover the personal incentive for attendance - that is over-payment on expenses was undermined. Formally the Central Council of the Federation provided a forum for meetings of the EC's of affiliated societies. In practice there was less incentive for individuals to attend and its authority as a forum for reaching decisions was reduced when compared with that of the Joint Executives (200).

The provision for adjusting contributions too was designed to make the Federation cheaper for the ASW, and to shift some of the burden of expenses to their smaller associates. On the final amendments, concerning the procedure for the Federation's annual conference, Smith was not wholly successful. It was proposed to remove from Regional Council delegates, some of whom were rank and file operatives, the right to attend the annual conferences of the Federation, and to limit attendance to members of the Joint Executives. Clearly this would have consolidated power within the Federation in the hands of Executive members. Since, on balance the ASW was the most powerful of the Federation's affiliates and since it had a full-time EC, it would have strengthened the hold of their

officials, which was already considerable, whilst removing any responsibility, other than through their own conference, of answering to the rank and file. The move was, not unnaturally, unpopular with representatives of the Regional Councils at conference, and it was not endorsed by many of the officials of other unions. When the matter was put to the vote, it was lost on a very close card count, by 207,000 in favour to 208,399 against - to the intense irritation of George Smith who insisted that there must be some mistake! He was obliged to accept the decision, but the impetus for ASW control was by no means ended (201).

The predominant influence of the ASW within the Federation had long been evident. It was based on the size and craft status of that union, and in the context of the erosion of the membership of all of the construction unions, leaders of the Woodworkers were impelled to revise Federation procedures in order to ensure that their power was not undermined. The creation of new alliances and the renewed threat of take-overs by the T&GW, encouraged Smith, who was no enthusiast for Federation, to review its operations, and finally to bring about its demise. The question of Regional Council representation within the NFBTO annual conference was revived only one year after the major rules revision. The question of representation related, not merely to the rights of rank and file members of the unions to send along their delegates through their Regional Councils. It was a question of the status of the Federation's conference, which, in the opinion of Smith, should not be regarded as a policy making body, since policy emanated from the Joint Executives and resolutions which were passed at conference had little or no impact on the issues which were finally negotiated. Yet Smith was no more

successful at the 1965 conference, in adjusting Federation structure in this way, than he had been in the previous year (202). The fact that the proposals for constitutional revision were not accepted, did nothing to increase the value placed on the Federation by the GS and EC members of the ASW.

Yet the Federation provided a means for the assertion of ASW control of site militancy through the revision of procedure within the trade union organisations, for the recognition of a dispute. In 1966 Smith brought forward an amendment to the existing rule to the effect that, in the event of a dispute involving members of more than one union in a stoppage, NFBTO affiliates should give full operation to the Conciliation and Disputes procedure. At the request of an interested union, the Federation Secretary was to convene a meeting of national representatives to consider a dispute. Individual unions were to give official recognition only after the fullest consultation with other unions whose members were involved. The motivation for this amendment lay in the events at the Barbican and the Horseferry Road, where officials of other unions had proved more willing to give official recognition than had the ASW. The ASW leadership were concerned to prevent the recurrence of a situation in which the more amenable attitude of officials of other unions towards the strikers, undermined their own resistance to provision of official backing.

The Federation's membership and financial strength was undermined by the problems affecting its individual member-unions. As trade union membership declined, there was a corresponding drop in the numbers on which each union affiliated. Between 1957 and the mid-60's there was a slow but steady decrease in

total affiliations, and attempts to offset the loss in income by increasing fees were counter-productive, since they encouraged each union to reduce the numbers affiliated (203). In 1923 it had been decided that, in order to meet federation obligations it was necessary to have a working balance of some £20,000. It was estimated that, in order to maintain an equivalent working balance in 1965, a sum of around £60,000 would be required. In fact the sum available was a mere £17,000, which was completely inadequate for the purpose. Fee increases for affiliation had been recommended in 1965, but no further action was taken, so that in 1966 the situation was severe (204). It was a mark of the Federation's weakness that its General Secretary was obliged to go cap in hand to his affiliates, in order to maintain the balance of funds which was essential to the running of his organisation. Further, it was a practice which did nothing to raise the standing of the NFBTO in the eyes of officials of the member-unions.

The authority of the NFBTO was further undermined by the decision of the ASW in 1968 to make dramatic cuts in their order for the Builders Standard, the paper of the NFBTO. The Standard had been published regularly for several years and it had provided an important means for encouraging and publicising the joint interests and activities of the construction unions. The arguments adduced by Smith for ceasing to support the paper reflected his profound dislike of the Federation.

'Some part of the paper' he said 'had obviously flowed out of the kind of thinking to which the ASW had consistently objected, where the Federation was trying to act as a union.' He argued, probably correctly that the ASW did not sell many

of the copies which it was currently taking, and pointed to his union's membership outside of the building industry, where members could not be expected to support the paper. It was as a consequence of this decision that the Federation EC recommended to the Central Council that the paper should cease publication (205). ASW support was essential for a Federation newspaper, as it was for the Federation itself. Without it neither could survive.

By 196' it was apparent that changes were imminent. Over the preceding four or five years there had been attempts to revamp the Federation. A Working Party had been set up, and, inevitably documents were produced. The modest amalgamations between kindred unions during the mid-60's did not require any corresponding amendments to Federation structure, but by 1969, with mergers crossing craft boundaries and the process of structural change altering, both in pace and dimensions, it was clear that the Federation could not survive in its present form. In a private session of the Federation's annual conference in that year, the name was changed to the National Federation of Construction Unions. And the title of the EC was altered to the Finance and General Purposes Committee. The change of title reflected the altered technical and industrial location of the Federation's members. It suggested too a growing awareness of the need for a re-evaluation of the distinction between 'building' and 'civil engineering' - between 'craft' and 'labourer'.

For all that the Federation's influence had been eroded, there was by no means unanimous feeling in favour of its abolition. Yet it could not be salvaged by a name change alone. It was the union leaders who were most resistant to

the ASW's universal take-over, who haunted their colleagues with the spectre of life without the Federation. Alf Tomkins became an ardent advocate of NFBTO somewhat late in his - and the Federation's - life. And George Lowthian, less critical of the policy which was being pursued by Smith, nonetheless saw advantages in the retention of the Federation (206). The most valuable feature of the Federation's activities had, from its inception, been the medium which it provided for the presentation of a co-ordinated policy to the employers. The TUC had, by 1970, set up a Construction Industry Consultative Committee, but there was resistance to the suggestion that this body might take on the responsibility for negotiations. It was in this area that the lack of confidence in future developments was most apparent. For although by 1970 it was apparent that the Federation could not last much longer, it was not clear what if anything, George Smith intended to put in its place.

The demise of the Federation was slow and painful. It involved dismantling a machine which had been evolving for over fifty years, and which had been central to bargaining procedures. It resulted from the establishment of direct control by the ASW of the smaller organisations - by 1971 they controlled some 70% of the membership in construction - in place of the indirect influence which had been wielded courtesy of the NFBTO. It was associated with the sense that 'they are going it alone anyway' (207). As Jack Youngs stated, on behalf of the ASW 'we do represent a few members in the industry; we do add some support to the NFCU as we did to the old Federation, and we do feel that sometimes we would like people to listen to us.' (208) What he wished people

to hear and to understand was that the leadership of the ASW was no longer prepared to tolerate the independence of much smaller and less influential bodies. By the NFCU's 2nd annual conference in 1971, discussion was centred, not on whether the Federation was to be disbanded, but on how it was to be disbanded. Two major practical problems existed, the Regional Secretaries, who were full-time officers, and the composite section. The first difficulty was surmounted by the preparedness of the ASW, to take over a number of the Regional Secretaries, in some cases offering them comparable positions within their new, regional structure. Those who did not wish to take up such offers received redundancy pay. The Composite Section posed more problems, since it was not an easy task to divide its members and allocate them to their respective organisations. Moreover the Executive of the Composite Section represented a small vested interest in the perpetuation of the NFCU and they were by no means amenable to their own dissolution. The issue was an occasion for overt conflict between representatives of the ASW and the T&GW, as both unions vied for the remains of the Federation's independent membership (209). The demise of the composite section ended the final vestige of Federation authority in the field of construction organisation. The way was now clear for a new style of organisation.

#### Building trade union mergers, 1960-71

UCATT was established on 1 July 1971 with a membership of 262,600 - the tenth largest union affiliated to the TUC. Its creation seemed to fulfil the decade of discussion on one union for the building industry. Yet it was created with the minimum of reference to, or consultation with the member-

ship of the unions involved. The mergers were effected, in every case on the basis of a transfer of engagements, requiring only a simple majority of the smaller union to express its approval in a ballot vote. So members of the largest union which was involved - the ASW, were never called upon to express an opinion on the changes which were to affect their trade union lives.

General secretaries of all of the unions seem to have had an inordinate influence, both on whether and with whom to discuss merger. Their hands were strengthened by the fact that negotiations were often initiated in a casual, and informal context, and it was only if there seemed to be some prospect of serious discussions that they were shifted on to a more formal basis. Consequently the general secretary might be in a position to select priorities and to make concessions, with a considerable measure of independence of his own Executive and membership. Personal relationships between one GS and another would be influential in governing the progress of negotiations, but this factor by no means determined the outcome of each round of talks. Relationships at a personal level might be amiable, but a merger would proceed only if it offered advantages to the GS or other members of a negotiating team. Significantly mergers were timed to coincide with the retirement of General Secretaries, and it was a fortunate coincidence that Lowthian, Austin and Harry Weaver were all due to retire around 1970. This meant that a general secretary of one union was not obliged to accept a subordinate position for any length of time, in a unified structure. It ensured that, with adequate provision for retirement, these men were not likely to oppose the changes which led up to the formation of

UCATT. In the case of George Smith the process of regrouping was designed, not only to consolidate the influence of this union, but also of his own position. Each move which was made - from the challenge to the role of the NFBTO, through discussions with other woodworking unions, to the merger of unions of building trade workers, was designed to reinforce his own standing, vis a vis leaders of other construction unions, as well as in the trade union world generally.

The UCATT derived its rules and its structure from the ASW, but it was clear that Smith would be prepared to adjust these rules where it might consolidate his own position internally within the new union. This was evident in discussions with other woodworking unions during the mid-60's, where the appointment of officials was justified by the ASW leadership, as a means of giving adequate representation to all trades (Clearly it was possible to reach this end without using this means). The appointment of officials would strengthen the hand of the EC, or appointing body, as against the District or Management Cttees. The imposition of a regional structure proved possible only through the merger with the ASP&D. Since ASW members had no vote on the transfer of engagement of the Painters, and since the vote on regionalisation was then extended to members of the Painters' Society, the decision on the regional structure circumvented the direct control of members of the ASW. Regionalisation provided a structure in which membership control would be eroded in favour of appointed regional secretaries and regional organisers who were confirmed in office after their second successful election.

Although each transfer required corresponding alterations to

the rules of the ASW, this did not involve an appeal to the membership for their approval. The alteration of the ASW's rules, in accordance with the arrangements agreed with another body for the transfer of its engagements required only a formal resolution by the EC of the ASW, following which the Registrar would approve the altered rules concurrently with his approval of the Instrument of Transfer (210).

If the general secretaries of the various unions showed considerable independence in their scope for discussions on merger, they could not carry a vote - where this was necessary, without the support of key elements amongst their own officials. In the case, both of the Painters and the AUBTW, officials were motivated to support amalgamation by the prospects of improving their own situation. Divisional Secretaries were a key element in Lowthian's support for merger into the ASW, and this almost certainly would not have happened without the improvement in pay and conditions which they could expect. In view of the division within the EC of that union in respect of amalgamation proposals it is unlikely that arrangements could have proceeded without support from this quarter. Within the ASP&D, EC officials could expect to improve their situation where they were transferred to the merged EC of the new union, and officials at Area or Management Committee level, like the Divisional Secretaries in the AUBTW, could expect to gain through pay increases, as their conditions would be brought into line with those prevailing in the ASW. Pension arrangements were a matter for widespread concern, since the ASW pension scheme was supported from general funds, and was not regarded as actuarially sound. And for full-time officials, as for general secretaries, the promise of satis-

factory conditions for retirement were an integral feature of merger arrangements (211).

The friendly benefits, which had seemed so important to past generations of trade unionists, were relatively unimportant in the discussions which led up to the formation of UCATT. It is true that arrangements had to be made to assimilate the various patterns of contributions and benefits of the AUBTW and the ASP&D into the different sections which existed for members within the ASW. But inflation had whittled away the real value of the benefits which accrued and feeling on this issue was much less strong than it had been 50 years earlier. Their perpetuation was a mark of the conservatism of craft unionism, for, as Lowthian said:

'we were running unions in the 1950's and into the 60's on an outlook and administration of the latter half of the nineteenth century.' Not only had the real value of the benefits declined, but the provision of various benefits had, to a considerable extent been superseded by State welfare provisions, especially in the post-war years. The elimination of sickness, tool and other friendly benefits was one of the first moves of the new union in an attempt to effect economies, and this is an indication of the relatively low importance which was attached to them, by the majority of the members as well as by officials.

The amalgamations which led up to the formation of UCATT consolidated craft trade unionism, as against those general unions which relied, for the most part, on unskilled or semi-skilled workers in construction. The amalgamation of the NBL&CWS into the AUBTW had been the first step across the line which divided the craft unions from those recruiting

labourers. It left T&GW officials in particular, less willing to accept the boundaries which had operated in the past. The election of a Labour government committed to expanding the output of new housing coincided with a boom in construction work to give a boost to innovations in technique during the 50's and 60's which were certain to erode the importance and influence of the craftsman. It encouraged the practice, which was already common in the late 40's and early 50's, of a form of wage contract - lump labour, which was inimical to trade unionism. As trade union membership was eroded it was the craft unions which suffered most seriously. So that the opportunities for the T&GW to expand its influence were ripe. Structural change of some kind was inevitable by the mid-60's. It was necessary as a means of rationalising the organisation and services of trade unions for a diminishing membership. It was essential if trade union leaders were to combat the loss of members through the increased use of 'lump' labour and consolidate their influence with their own activists who were disenchanted by the failure of their unions either to function effectively in negotiations at national level, or to provide them with support for disputes on site.

Two, rival influences were at work in negotiations on the form which the new structures were to take. The first was the logic of craft identity - the allegiance which had been built up between craft unions within the NFBTO over past decades, whatever their other differences, in the face of the general unions, especially the T&GW, within the arena of building trade unionism. The second was the division between left and right within the craft societies - a division which operated both on inter and on intra-union relations. It was the first factor which impelled the craft societies into closer relations

as the threat from the T&GW b came more apparent. Whatever the realities of craft sectionalism - and it had certainly not been abolished by the innovations in the construction process - the craft societies shared common assumptions about the form and practices which should under-pin their existence. They were led, almost without exception, by men who were themselves time-served craftsmen, and were committed to a form of trade union organisation which was exclusive to men sharing a common occupation, or group of occupations. It was this commitment which could lead into discussions of the apparently contradictory notion of a 'general union for the building industry' (212). Inherent in this commitment was the resistance to incorporation within an organisation such as the T&GWU. The boundaries between crafts had been eroded by changes in building materials and technique. The form of organisation which emphasised friendly benefits as a central feature of the union's services to its members had ceased to be relevant to workers in construction in the 1960's. But many of the attitudes from which the craft identity was derived were perpetuated by union leaders who shared a background in this craft tradition.

Political allegiances were no less profound than craft identities. They were at their most acute where one was reinforced by the other - for example where the 'progressive' AUBTW came into conflict with the 'conservative' ASW; or where the 'conservative' painters allied themselves with the 'conservative' woodworkers, as a means of strengthening their industrial position. Amalgamation assumed a simple logic. In the latter case, where the EC's of the two societies shared a common outlook as well as a similar framework for their organisations. And if the left within either organisation objected to propo-

sals - as did Communists within the ASP&D, their influence was sufficiently limited that it did not threaten the outcome of negotiations. The merger of the PTU and the ETU provided another example of merger between unions of like political outlook. Where political and craft identities conflicted the situation was more complex, and the resulting strategy for amalgamation was consequently less coherent. This was the case for members of the Communist Party in respect of the projected merger of the AUBTW into the ASW&P. Craft was divided from craft and EC members from the rank and file activists, depending on whether craft or political allegiances were made the priority. The attractions of the 'left' image of the T&GW, under the general secretaryship of Jack Jones conflicted, for members of the AUBTW with the craft identity of their own organisation. And they were consequently weakened in their resistance to an amalgamation which they identified as an alliance of conservative forces.

The formation of UCATT resulted from the crisis of trade union organisation in construction. It was a crisis in membership and in the financial standing of the unions; a crisis in their role within the central bargaining machinery of the industry and on the sites. It was a crisis in which the craft societies could preserve their identity only by the apparently contradictory procedure of submerging it into a larger craft society. It was a crisis in which the leadership of the ASW moved from an indirect to a direct control over the members and organisers of the associated craft unions, as a means of blocking the progress of the T&GW within the construction industry. The 'one big union' had finally been established, but not on the basis of the initiative and enthusiasm of the

members. It was on the authority of the various general secretaries and EC members who were involved in negotiations that the new union was created, with the minimum approbation of the membership.

## CONCLUSION

### UCATT: 'One Big Union'?

UCATT was formed on 1 June 1971 with a membership of 262,600, and assets worth £2,650,528. Its creation seemed to vindicate William Bradshaw's assertion, made in 1920 that the NFBTO would pave the way for the establishment of 'One Big Union' for the building industry. Yet many of the activists of the intervening years might have argued that it was the Federation, with its domination of the bargaining machinery and its own body of officials, which precluded earlier progress in the direction of amalgamation. Moreover UCATT might be the largest of the unions representing workers in the field of construction, but it could certainly not be claimed that it was the only union in that field. The longstanding distinction between craftsman and labourer was reflected by the presence of the T&GWU and the G&MWU on the NJCBI. For as long as the general unions confined their recruitment to labourers and semi-skilled workers they posed little threat to the craftsmen. As long as the Perth agreement was observed craft could contemplate merger (unhurriedly) with craft and debate the question of 'industrial unionism' with scant reference to the merger of craft with labourer. Once the general unions had established their base in building and civil engineering, it was not likely that they would lightly relinquish it to the craft unions to further the improbable cause of industrial unionism. Since the general unions had formally established their rights to recruit and negotiate within this field over the previous half century, there was no question that they could now be removed, however unsatisfactory this might be for the belated move towards unity. Indeed it was the general unions - and especially the T&GWU - who were making much of the running, since the abrogation of the Perth Agreement left

the way free for them to recruit amongst tradesmen as well as amongst the semi-skilled and unskilled workers in construction.

If UCATT could not clearly be identified as the union for all building workers, nor could it make unchallenged claim to recruit operatives engaged on all woodworking processes, since the merger of NUFTO and the ASWM to form the Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades Union had established a major rival in this area, which, like the UCATT was affiliated to the NJCBI. Not only were the majority of labourers and semi-skilled specialists outside of the ranks of UCATT, but amongst furniture and woodworking operatives - some of whom had voted to merge with the ASC&J as early as 1916 - a separate society had been consolidated.

If UCATT was not the 'One Big Union' which had been envisaged over fifty years earlier, it was nonetheless the largest concentration of building trade unionists. It was too the only union which recruited primarily amongst construction workers, and to this extent claims could justifiably be made that it was 'the union for construction workers'. Leaders of its constituent parts had anticipated that it would tap a wider support than could be claimed, in aggregate by the old craft societies. Perhaps this was a self-fulfilling prophecy, since their own commitment to the new organisation - and their awareness of the problems which must be overcome if survival were to be ensured, meant that they worked to achieve that wider support (1). For whatever reason, it does seem to be the case that the UCATT, in its early years, was able to improve on the membership and support which could be claimed by its predecessors.

If UCATT did not at its inception take the form or the philosophy projected by industrial unionists before 1914, it did nonetheless represent the logical conclusion to the movement which connected the local craft society of the 19th century with the broad membership base and the centralised national structure of construction trade unionism today. Two periods stand out, in the twentieth century, as years when advances have been made in this direction. From the end of the first world war until the failure of amalgamation talks between the ASW and the AUBTW in 1922/3 the question of structural change was central to the development of building trade unionism. The mergers which were effected, and the organisations which were created during this period survived for half a century, and in many respects it could be argued they laid the basis for the second major round of mergers between 1968 and 1971. But there was no simple dynamic which moved inevitably to the formation of one large construction union. Broader industrial developments, the impact of political affairs, the pattern of projected changes and their interpretation, both by the members and leaders of the union concerned provided the framework for structural change. Whilst the mergers of 1919-21 may be viewed as part of a continuum, leading to the more unified structure of 1971, they must also be seen in a context which is historically specific and which relates to the impact of war and industrial change on trade unions and their members.

The following aspects of the problem have been given detailed attention in the historical account. Firstly consideration has been given to the relationship between trade union democracy and structural adaptation. How far does amalgamation affect the rights of union members to decide and control the policies of their own union. And indeed who controls the amalgamation itself?

Secondly the question of trade union structure was related to the process of industrial change. Finally consideration was given to the form and classification of the trade unions which have evolved.

The object of this concluding chapter is to summarise the major themes which have been outlined and to assess their implications for the analysis of trade union structure in building production.

#### Trade union structure and trade union democracy

No account of the earlier period of merger can be given without reference to the impact of syndicalist ideals which served to popularise the rationalisation of trade union structure. It is true that the amalgamation of all of the building trade unions could not attract a high proportion of union members to vote in its support in 1912 (2), but the question of amalgamation of cognate trades - a more limited aim, with more immediate prospects of realisation was a popular cause, both with members of the larger and the smaller building trade societies. Whilst 'one big union' proved to be a subject for dissent between right and left, a more limited merger between kindred trades could be favoured by both as a means to greater efficiency and unity. The point was proved by the success of the unions concerned in satisfying the requirements of the Trade Union Amalgamation (Amendment) Act of 1917, which although more moderate than the standards imposed by earlier legislation, required nonetheless a high level of participation by union members in the ballot (3). Members were concerned by and involved in the decision to amalgamate and to this extent the formation of the ASW and the AUBTW were defined by a popular commitment to structural adjustment.

The formation of UCATT, by contrast cannot be construed as resulting from popular pressure, either at a general level or on the specific proposals for merger which were brought forward at the end of the sixties. It is true that the ideological commitment on the left to 'one big union' had been retained. It was built into the objectives of the New Builders Leader and The Building Workers Charter and it continued to be cited by members of the Communist Party when questions of amalgamation were raised. But its inclusion as one of the tenets of the left is not evidence in this case of a commitment to the principle. Political kinship and personal ambition were the real keys to amalgamation discussions, and communists in the building trade unions, other than the ASW, were inclined to support transfer into the Transport and General Workers Union, once Frank Cousins and Jack Jones had shifted the political identity of that union to the left. The problem within the ASW was slightly different. As the largest of the building unions it was the least likely to subordinate its identity within a general union. And since the AUBTW had always been characterised as 'left' by contrast with the Woodworkers, Communists within the Woodworkers could adhere to the principle of amalgamation between the building trades unions and at the same time feel that they were furthering their own political ends. The consequences were twofold. Firstly there was no clear perspective within the Communist Party, on the orientation of amalgamation during the 1960's and none was forthcoming from any other direction. Secondly the theory of industrial unionism which had retained a formal status within the objectives of the left, had diminished value for political practice.

If it seems from the above that 'popular pressure' is being equated with the left, and particularly with the Communist

Party, this is because it was only from this quarter that a coherent view was expressed on trade union structure. Amalgamation was, for most trade unionists in the 60's an issue which was far removed from their daily working lives. It could be that the ritual references to amalgamation had served only to diminish interest in an issue which was so regularly discussed but which produced so few results. But it seems more likely that for trade unionists in construction the activities of the officials and leadership and conference discussions on questions of structure had little relationship to the site level experience of the members. The gap which existed between members and officials was not conducive to membership involvement on this question. Schemes for amalgamation originated from the Head Offices of the unions involved, rather than from the members at branch or district level. They may have lacked the momentum behind the earlier amalgamation movement, but they benefitted from the division amongst the political left, who were the only element to give any expression to an alternative perspective on the realignment of the trade union movement.

If the reformulation of trade unions was an issue which could arouse interest and support before 1914, and if by the 1960's, this had ceased to be the case, this is merely an indication of the changed significance of structural adjustment over the course of the century. The industrial unionist favoured that type of organisation primarily because its existence was assumed to pose a challenge to the existing relationship between employer and operative. Concern with the industrial union before 1914 was not a fetishism of the organisational form, but an assumption that if amalgamation along industrial lines could be brought about, it would change fundamentally the

nature and meaning of trade unionism. The industrial unionist was a critic of the trade union official, whom he regarded as collaborating with the employer to reinforce the subordinate position of the operative. Yet he wanted to strengthen his trade union organisation, to build its power base, not in order to strengthen the official element, but to challenge the role which it had hitherto assumed.

The formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1920 provided an alternative organisational focus and attracted many of the syndicalists who had been active before 1914. Revolutionary expression demanded a political form, not least because the revolution in Russia seemed to pose a model which could be emulated in the West. Questions of industrial organisation as a means to revolution were by-passed by the reassertion of the primacy of political action and political organisation. Whilst the objectives of the syndicalists were never wholly abandoned, they played a lesser part in the trade union life of the Communist militant in the 1930's than they had done for his syndicalist counterpart before the first world war. Assumptions concerning the significance of 'one big union' were never seriously challenged within the builders rank and file movements of the inter-war years - a fact which is surprising in the light of the formation of both the Transport and General Workers Union and the General and Municipal Workers Union during this period. Amalgamation along industrial lines remained one of the tenets of the movement around New Builders Leader, but there was little attempt to reconcile the theory with the practical problems posed by the existence of the general unions and their presence within building production (4). It was through opposition to craft sectionalism at site level

that the values of industrial unionism could most effectively be related to the changed circumstances of the inter-war situation. And it was in this area that supporters of the NBL carried out some of their most effective campaigns.

If the question of trade union structure was of diminishing significance for the rank and file activist, it was increasingly important for the leadership of the building unions. With the formal ratification of pbr after the second world war the authority of the national Executive of building unions suffered, both from the ability of some site stewards and local officials to negotiate high bonus rates, and from the presence of 'lump' labour paid rates well in excess of those which resulted from central collective bargaining. Mechanisation and innovation in the building process combined to diminish the importance of craft skills, posing a serious threat to the long term survival of the craft form of organisation. Whilst there was little popular demand for the rationalisation of building labour to meet this threat, leaders of the building trade organisations were unable to ignore indefinitely the dilemma posed by a decline in membership and financial crisis. The mergers of 1970/71 were essentially defensive in character, for they derived from the crisis in organisation in construction, a crisis which undermined the capacity of the craft societies to maintain their separate and autonomous existence (5).

A contrast can be made then between the mergers of 1920/21 which were effected on the basis of a long campaign among the membership in favour of amalgamation, and the creation of UCATT in 1970/71 as a result of the serious long-term crisis of trade unionism in construction. The situation of the unions

prior to merger can be most sharply contrasted by reference to the membership figures in each case. The vitality of trade unionism during and after world war one is reflected in the steady expansion of the building craft organisations, whilst it is the crisis in membership which highlights the problems of the 60's, providing a rationale for amalgamation.

But in making this distinction <sup>(is)</sup> it important not to ignore the role played by the leadership of the major unions during both mergers. Negotiations around the question of amalgamation, like other central negotiations were initiated and conducted by the leadership - meaning the General Secretaries and some executive members. Whatever the feelings of the members on the question, it was only through this medium that contacts could be established at national level with other unions, and plans drawn up for the implementation of merger. Pressure could be brought to bear from local level through the establishment of joint union committees or local federations, but no decisive move was possible on the issue of national unity. Questions of personal status and power played an enormous part in every serious round of merger discussions. General Secretaries of larger unions might anticipate that the incorporation of smaller rivals would consolidate their own leading position. Their counterparts in the smaller societies would be less sympathetic to merger proposals precisely because of the potential elimination of their own position and associated status. Merger between two smaller unions might seem more attractive to their leaders than take over by one, much larger society - as in the case of the projected merger between the OSM and the MUOB. Tripartite negotiations raised the possibility of playing off one rival against another - as in the case of the Woodworking

unions during the sixties. The role and attitudes of the General Secretaries of the building unions were frequently cited as a significant element in the progress of amalgamation negotiations during the sixties, and in this respect the later round of merger talks is merely a restatement of the problems of the earlier period. Popular pressure was of no avail if a projected merger did not accord with the vested interests of the leading officials within the union in which it was proposed. John Batchelor and George Hicks of the OBS were undoubtedly sympathetic to the movement for industrial unionism, but their sympathy was certainly tinged with the awareness that as leaders of the second largest building trade union, they were in a favourable position to contest the leadership of any merged society. Hicks's reluctance, in the early 20's to accept the NFBTO as an established feature of the trade union world reflected the limitations which it posed, both to projects for amalgamation between the ASW and the AUBTW, and to the extent of his influence within the existing organisational framework. If amalgamation was a popular cause around the time of the first world war, its popularity was mediated by the interests of the key trade union officials in that period. Whether or not the question of structural change has wide acclaim amongst the membership the attitudes of officials must be reckoned as central both to the extent and the form of its implementation.

The question of ballots on projected amalgamations has received attention in this account of structural change and it is clear that legal requirements must be satisfied before amalgamation can proceed. But even here the influence of officialdom is felt insofar as members can be encouraged to participate in a ballot by a convinced and convincing official. Decisions as to the way in which the vote shall take place, the period

which is allowed for its completion and any recommendations which are made by the union executive are likely to be key points in facilitating or blocking the successful conclusion of a proposed amalgamation. Legal changes in respect of trade union amalgamation allowed a significant development in this respect, for whereas the formation of the ASW and the AUBTW could be accomplished only by a ballot of all of the members of all of the unions concerned, the formation of UCATT was successfully accomplished without any vote being taken of the members of the largest of the unions, the ASW, from which it was derived. The decision to effect merger via transfer of engagements in the latter case ensured that, once a decision was taken by leaders of the respective craft unions, the legal requirements on membership involvement could easily be satisfied. But it was a decision which was taken at the cost of membership involvement. The transfer of engagements, a method of merger favoured by the leaders of the unions concerned, precluded an expression of opinion from within the ASW. And it was from this quarter that the expression of opinion was most likely to be unfavourable.

It has been noted elsewhere that questions of trade union structure and trade union government are inextricably linked (6). This is evidenced within the building trade unions to the extent that membership opinion has been used to validate decisions already taken on the subject of merger. The relationship between structure and government has been most clearly reflected in the extent to which changes in structure are used by the leaders of the bodies concerned to centralise and concentrate power in their own hands. It was the General Secretary of the merged organisation who was the prime

beneficiary. His standing, both with his own members and in the wider trade union movement was certainly enhanced by effective mergers. The larger his union the more effect he could have within the NFBTO, the NJCBI, the TUC and the Labour Party. But his position within the union depended less on the equation between size and power and more on the shift in balance of influence between active members at site and district level, and the central administrative machinery of which he was the leading figure. The casual nature of building production meant that the site level activist - the man who was prepared to risk his own job to organise on site - was of paramount importance to trade union organisation. But national organisation was based on central control, particularly in financial issues concerned with strike action. The ensuing tension did not automatically pit the union leadership against District or Management Committees, where shop steward opinion found expression, for in the more rural areas it was likely that leadership opinion would be endorsed and supported. It was the well organised urban areas, Liverpool, London, Manchester and Glasgow for example where the body of trade union opinion was most militant that District and Management Committees were most likely to conflict with the leadership of their own organisations. And it was because of the assertion of independence from such areas that succeeding General Secretaries built and sustained a central base of support for their own policies at national level. The expression of local militancy was countered by the creation of a body of full-time opinion within each union which owed some allegiance to the views and policies of the General Secretary.

Since the discussion of amalgamation was closely associated with comparisons of the forms of internal organisation of each

society, and since those discussions took place very largely at the behest of the General Secretary in each case, it is not surprising if he used the opportunity to remould the internal structure of the emerging union to his own advantage.

Exponents of trade union amalgamation claimed that its realisation would lead to a reduction in numbers and a rationalisation of the organisation of trade union officials. Yet the opposite proved to be the case in some instances. For if the leading official was concerned to reinforce his position he was likely to favour and encourage the creation of new posts, in which office holders would share and support his views against those of the dissident Districts. The creation of the full-time Executive in the ASW is perhaps the best example of this process, but it is also reflected in the creation of a body of full-time Divisional Officers within the AUBTW, and in the assertion of increased central financial control over appointments made at District level in both unions. The formation of UCATT saw the creation of new positions (although they reflected the structure which had existed within the NFBTO) at Regional level, where officials would be more removed from the attitudes and problems of site level activist. Although the long term trend was towards a reduction in the number of officials in this case, largely because of the financial strains which beset the new union, a central imperative in the rules revision which accompanied the merger of the Painters into the ASW was the appointment of officials within the context of a regional structure.

Full-time officials of the building trades unions never enjoyed the security of tenure which was allowed to comparable positions in some other unions (17). They were elected and have

been required to stand for re-election every three to five years. This ensured that they were never wholly free from the obligation to direct their attention to the views of rank and file members, especially where those views were given organised expression at District level. Whilst it has been argued that members in such a situation are generally reluctant to deprive a sitting official of his position, the fact that they could do so may deter an official from ignoring a clear expression of membership opinion. Yet at the senior levels officials espoused values and policies which conflicted fundamentally with those of the advanced sections of the members. Executive Council members of the ASW had, throughout the history of that union, the right to authorise and end the financial commitment of the union to strike action. Based at the union's headquarters in Manchester (for most of the period) they were removed from the overwhelming difficulties of organisation on site. Their primary commitment, through the NJCBI was to the constitutional procedures<sup>a</sup> established at national level and if procedure did not always accord with the pressures of the site situation, their allegiance was likely to be to procedure. At the policy level, their focus was on the levelling up of the bottom grades in the national wage structure, so that the differential between rural and urban areas was reduced and eventually eliminated. So at the policy level too conflict with the better organised urban areas seemed inevitable. The tensions between central Executive control and the autonomy of local shop steward organisation in such districts was confirmed within the union by the establishment of the full-time Executive.

If the Executive commitment to centralised control was modified only by their position as elected officials, the situation

at District level was more ambiguous. District officials were also elected, but were more directly answerable to and in contact with the men who elected them. They were funded to some extent by their own locality, so their wages were dependent in some measure on the organisation and income which was maintained. They were sometimes responsible for initiating movements to organise, by moving militants on to unorganised sites, so that the struggle to sustain trade unions in building production was a part of their experience as officials. In some ways the District Official appeared as the updated version of the 'Walking delegate', yet the District Official had a standing at national level which was never accorded to his nineteenth century counterpart. As a full-time official with status in the national rules, and backing from central funds, he was part of the network of centralised control of union affairs, at the same time as his position derived from and gave support to the struggles of the locality in which he was based.

If the structure of the ASP&D reflected that of the ASW, after the creation of the full-time Executive, that of the AUBTW did not. The existence of a lay Executive and the focus of organisation around Divisional and District Committees suggested less tension between central and local levels and allowed militant opinion to be channelled through formal and official positions at every level within the union. As full-time officials, the Divisional Organisers owed allegiance to the General Secretary, yet they were based in the Division for which they were elected and were in regular contact with lay officials, both at District and Divisional level. Like the District Officer within the ASW (or ASP&D) their position

was ambiguous, although within their own Division their influence was unparalleled. Whilst their position reflected the pressures to develop a unified structure at the national level, it was mediated by their geographical location and their contact with the membership.

Questions of power were central to the operation of structural adjustment. Power depended not only on the size of the unions concerned. It was also gauged by reference to the internal relations which defined the mode of government within each society. If the Management Committees, the key organisation within the better unionised areas in the ASW, could be weakened, so it seemed the central authority of the union's Executive could be expanded. The policy of regionalisation advocated by the leadership of the ASW for more than twenty years derived from this philosophy and it was on this basis that UCATT was constructed. The elimination of the Management Committees promised to relieve George Smith and his Executive of the power base, used by militants. The abolition of the NFBTO eliminated the only position - that of GS in the Federation, which could rival that of Smith, and brought unions with a craft tradition in building production under the direct control of the leadership of the ASW.

To what extent can it be claimed that the structural changes within the building unions were characteristic of the process of structural change within the British trade union movement more generally? A detailed comparison with other unions is not feasible within the present study, since attention has been directed primarily to the building trade unions. Yet certain points can be made in this connection to high-

light both the similarities and the peculiarities of the construction unions, by contrast with other bodies.

Firstly it is clear that the general unions, and especially the Transport and General Workers Union, were founded and built on the principle of amalgamation. The ASW and the AUBTW, for all of the successes of 1920/21, did not embody the open and positive approach towards expansion by merger which characterised the larger general unions. Amalgamation was fundamental to the existence of the T&GWU and its value was never forgotten, by Bevin or by his successors. The formation of UCATT has been cast as essentially defensive in character, yet it would be wrong to forget that both the T&GWU and the G&MWU were created in the midst of a trade depression, when unions were losing members. The value of amalgamation in such a context was almost unquestionable and it was passed on as received wisdom within the T&GWU where the inherent advantages of being the largest single trade union were quickly appreciated. The structure of the union was itself designed to facilitate the incorporation of smaller bodies and to overcome the inhibitions formerly posed by craft or occupational boundaries. And the size of both of the large general unions precluded fears within them of 'takeover' which were common within the smaller unions when questions of amalgamation were under discussion.

The formation of the T&GWU provides further evidence of the power of trade union leaders to fashion their union's structure according to their own preferences. Ernest Bevin, as Assistant Secretary within the Dockers' Union was in a good position from which to effect the formation of a new

amalgamated transport union in 1920/21. The amalgamation was achieved, very largely because of Bevin's commitment to the principle. Proposals for an amalgamation between the Dockers Union and the National Union of General Workers, made in the months after the conclusion of the first world war, were defeated primarily because they failed to attract Bevin's support. There was little opposition to the scheme, but a majority of members in the Dockers Union did not bother to vote, and the number of abstentions in Bevin's own area around Bristol was extremely high. Inevitably it must be concluded that the failure of these amalgamation proposals derived from his own lack of enthusiasm for the scheme. (7) Amalgamation with other transport unions was a more attractive proposition for Bevin, since the Dockers Union would be the lynch pin in the new organisation, whilst in the projected merger with the NUGW it was merely a smaller partner. Bevin has long been recognised as the architect of the amalgamation which resulted in the creation of the T&GWU but he was also the principle beneficiary of the structure which he designed. He deliberately excluded his opponent and former general secretary, Ben Tillett, from a position of influence within the new union, and he reserved for himself the post of general secretary. Personal rivalries were acute yet the conflict generated between Bevin and Tillett, is but one example of the personal jockeying for position which accompanied most trade union mergers. At every step the amalgamation was jeopardized by personal interests, and in his determination to bring the negotiations to a successful conclusion Bevin 'showed a wise respect for vested interests leaving it to time to reduce the anomalies' (8). He inherited, as a result, a form of union organisation which permitted him almost unparalleled power. The general secretary

of the T&GWU was the only full-time official permitted a voice within that union's lay Executive. Elected, like them, by the membership, he claimed an unrivalled influence in the running of union affairs. Bevin used the opportunities presented by amalgamation as a means to furthering his own influence and authority within the new union.

The creation of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers Union in 1923, like the formation of the T&GWU derived from the impetus within the largest of the amalgamating unions, to broaden its membership and standing within the trade union movement. The National Union of General Workers was by far the largest constituent of the new union, and its General Secretary, Will Thorne and its President, J.R. Clynes, were able to use the occasion of the merger to strengthen their own position and authority, retaining their posts within the new union after the amalgamation with the National Amalgamated Union of Labour and the Municipal Employees Association. Thorne was already a power within the TUC, so the merger was less significant for his personal situation, than was the creation of the T&GWU for Bevin. The new union was based fundamentally on the rulebook of the NUGW, so the changes in the internal democratic structure were less marked than within the T&GWU where the formation of trade groups provided a new dimension to the pattern of trade union organisation (9).

It is clear from these examples that the trends apparent in the context of structural adjustment within the building trade unions are not confined to that area. It seems likely that the power relations which were so important in defining changes in the building trade unions have been similarly

significant in moulding the shape and style of other trade unions.

Questions of trade union government have been fundamental to the experience of structural alteration in construction as elsewhere. This is not to suggest that it is only at the point when amalgamation or merger is under consideration that moves are under way to amend or revise constitutional procedures with a view to their centralisation. This process has its own dynamic for constitutional amendment is on-going. But amalgamation has provided the occasion for some of the more far reaching amendments in the field of trade union government and questions of government have been in the forefront of considerations of trade union amalgamation. Industrial logic is a vital ingredient in the mergers which have been described but decisions are taken through prescribed forms of organisation whose leaders have the perpetuation of their own power as a central consideration.

#### Trade union structure and industrial change

Central to the development and activities of the early trade societies was their craft identity. Craft skills were decreed either by the completion of a recognised apprenticeship within a certain trade, or by the ability to earn the recognised rate for the job after a certain, prescribed period working with the tools. A trade might be defined by reference to work with certain materials with which the tradesman would be adept - brick or stone for example; it might assume a particular end product made from that material - for example in the case of a cabinet maker. It might span a range of industrial locations, according to the work which could be accomplished with a particular material - as in the case of a carpenter

employed on board ship compared with the carpenter engaged in house building. But in every case it would be associated with exclusive rights to a particular piece of work as a result of special training and expertise. A major difficulty involved in the definition of the terms 'craft', 'trade' and 'skill' is that their meaning and significance varied, both between different occupations and over time within the same occupation. What is common to the three major crafts which have been considered - and to others which have been mentioned, is their longstanding status within building manufacture. At the beginning of the century manual dexterity was associated with the application of hand tools on procedures which seemed to offer little potential for mechanisation, and assertions concerning 'skill displacing technological change' must be made with caution in this area if they are to have any significance.

In many ways it is the continuation of craft skill in building, rather than its elimination which is most striking. Many small employers and self-employed are engaged in building or repair work and this means that work is often undertaken by firms with low and often inadequate capitalisation. The variety of the work undertaken by building concerns is a disincentive to investment in plant and equipment. And whilst building production is relatively labour intensive, high labour costs are minimised by the casual nature of the industry. The centralisation of capital has meant the growth of a few large concerns, but this has not necessarily been at the expense of the smaller undertakings. Their survival has been guaranteed both by the continued importance of the small job market, which is of little interest to firms such

as Wimpeys or Costains, and by their role in a sub-contract capacity on larger jobs. The consequence is that the rationalisation and standardisation which have featured in other sectors of employment have been modified in their effects on building and construction work. Traditional skills have retained a place within the labour market, so that the long survival of a trade union form of organisation which was associated with craft skills must be related to their continued relevance and to the slow pace of innovation.

Yet the process of structural change in union organisation has to be related to the adaptation and modification of the labour process as employers sought to reduce labour costs and to raise control over output. Mechanisation provides the simplest example - whether in respect of the application of power to hand tools, used by skilled workers, or in the development of earth moving machinery which could reduce the requirement for unskilled labour. Innovations in respect of the product which was to be created were fundamental, insofar as they challenged the use of existing materials, and correspondingly the right of the craftsman to work with those materials in the customary way. The experience of two world wars - both of them creating a slump in the house building market contributed to the development of and application of new materials and new products in a way which threatened to revolutionise many of the accepted craft processes in construction. And during the post-war years the vogue for industrialised system building eroded the value which had formerly been placed on craftsmanship in many areas of production. 'Skill displacing technological change' was not confined to the years before 1914 - if anything it was during both wars and in the years following world war 2 that it proceeded most rapidly. But it is

important to recognise its limitations, as well as its effects if the survival of craft organisations - albeit in a modified form - through to the late 1960's is to be understood.

Technological innovation was a slow and uneven process in the field of construction. The smaller sites and the smaller jobs were less likely to be affected - for many of the processes would be viable in their early stages only if economies of scale could be effected. On the larger jobs moves in this direction would depend on the particular problems which were to be encountered on that site, or for that piece of work. An employer might experiment - for example with the use of pre-fabricated components - on one site in response to an architect's requirements, only to return to more traditional methods on a later job. And for the craftsman employed on a casual basis, the extent to which the range of skills might be deployed would depend on his movement from large to small site - from the industrialised to the traditional forms of building. Questions of craft control were blurred by the transient working life of the building craftsman, as well as by changing job requirements.

It has become a commonplace to assert that demarcation problems were not widespread in construction in the post-war years. Yet it was the shortage of craftsmen which was in large measure responsible, for the ready availability of alternative and lucrative employment undermined the will to challenge the use or distribution of new processes of work. Industrial innovation was implemented against an inadequate supply of skilled labour and whilst the consequences may not have threatened directly the employment prospects of the individual

craftsman, they went some way towards revising the boundaries between skilled and unskilled, or between the craftsman and the specialist.

'Deskilling' was of particular importance to the traditional crafts. Attention has been directed particularly to the trowel trades, to the carpenters and joiners and to the painters. In every case it is apparent that the scope and the content of craft work was limited, over the period under consideration, by innovations in method and technique. The elimination of much masonry and brickwork through the use of concrete, the development of pre-fabricated components especially joinery, the use of ready-mixed paints and paint sprays were all a part of this process. Industrialised building, with its use of steel and glass further reduced the role of the skilled operative. And if the craftsman was not threatened with elimination on new building of this type (for systems never worked exactly and a craftsman was always needed to adapt components) he was required to exercise a narrower range of skills, with some of the most exacting tasks replaced by new materials or components. However uneven the process of change, the trend, taken over the period as a whole was towards a lowered demand for craftsmen with the requirement of a narrower range of craft skills.

The application of new technology is as likely, it has been argued, to lead to the evolution of new skills as it is to eliminate the role of the skilled worker. To what extent has this been shown to be true within the field of building and civil engineering? How far do the innovations which have been made lend themselves to the development of specialisation?

And if this is the case what are the implications for trade union organisation? It is apparent in a number of areas that specialist occupations have grown up in response to the changing requirements of the construction process. Steel erectors were necessitated by the steel framed building; shuttering hands were required as concrete became more widely used; as steel replaced wood in scaffolding and as buildings became higher, so the work of the scaffolder became more complex and employment in this area became more specialised. System building required general skills relating to assembly rather than the particular trade associated with working in one material or group of materials in the traditional way. And if the training was shorter and the range of work undertaken by each operative more limited in the specialist trades, this was because they fulfilled a different role, often on different sites to the majority of skilled craftsmen.

The craft response to the emergence of the specialist occupations was to build this difference into the wage structure of the industry. The craftsman was not, on the whole, concerned to assert his right to the new classes of work which were evolving. As long as craftsmen were in short supply and the specialist trades were not threatening their preserve, there seemed to be little reason to lay claim to the tasks which they were undertaking. Fundamental to the craft approach within the building trades was the assertion of the difference and distinction which should be made between the skilled and the unskilled worker. The specialist trades - however important their contribution to the construction process - were to be ranged on the side of the unskilled. And if the implications for their pay were modified by the application of plus

payments to the unskilled rate, their position was nonetheless defined by this decision. The major exception was the electricians whose trade union base was essentially outside of the construction industry. They increased dramatically in numbers during the period under consideration, and were able to establish themselves as a recognised trade with full skilled status. But otherwise the traditional crafts evinced a conservatism in relation to their status which accorded with the slow pace of industrial change.

The distinction between the craftsman and the specialist was that between apprenticeship training and a shorter and perhaps less formal system of learning. Although the period of time spent on an apprenticeship has gradually been reduced, and despite the fact that the craft occupations were not exclusively comprised of men who had served apprenticeships, the craftsman was more likely to have received a formal training - and the training period would be longer than in the specialist field. The specialist worker may have acquired a particular expertise but this would not involve the range or the complexity of operations associated with craft skill. This is apparent if attention is turned to these areas of work which were transferred over time, from the site to a factory. In joinery, where manufacture of window frames and doors was already common at the beginning of this period, standardisation and simplification of processes allowed the application of labour which was unskilled and untrained. The encroachment of women onto aspects of work which had previously been the prerogative of the craftsman was an indication of the extent to which the deskilling process could be carried. Specialisation in this area cannot be equated with 'reskilling', although for parti-

lar workers in certain firms it may have had that consequence. The difficulty of definition and generalisation is that the process was a dynamic one in an industry where for the most part the location as well as the method of production was constantly shifting. But the application of a historical perspective suggests that craft played a more restricted part within the industry during the decade preceding the formation of UCATT, than it had in the earlier years of the century. Innovations in the construction process were an integral part of the breakdown of craft trade unionism.

Other commentators highlighted the influence of labour-only sub-contracting in undermining the effectiveness of trade union organisation in construction. There has been an associated assumption that shifts in technology had little part to play in the breakdown of craft organisation and that the 'lump' as a form of engagement was solely responsible for the diminishing membership returns and weakening vitality of the craft societies.

Clearly it would be mistaken to underestimate the anti-trade union influence of labour-only and the effects which its use has had in the post-war years. Labour-only has operated to by-pass trade union organisation, to substitute the individual for the collective contract, to define the operative as self-employed rather than as an employee and to encourage tax evasion as a means of relieving pressure for higher wages. For the fly-by-night and the 'cowboy' who are after quick returns it has proved satisfactory. For the trade unionist in construction, faced with the tough, recurrent problems of site organisation, and with the blacklist as a penalty for his

activity, it has been a disaster. High returns made to labour-only men make the nationally negotiated rate seem derisory. The safety and health of all operatives on site can be jeopardized by the few who are concerned only to finish and move on to the next job. And the collective issues of welfare on site are of little concern to the lumpers for whom a tea-break means only time and money lost. Those who approve lump labour and who stress its collective identity in gang work (10) fail to comprehend that the lumper has no means of relating to the broader identity of men employed on one site or in one town. Their presence serves to casualise an industry which is already casual, and to weaken the precarious collective organisation in a sector in which the employers have proved to be consistently and virulently anti-trade union.

For all these reasons LOSC is a form of engagement which has been used and encouraged by the employers. It is the modern day form of the 'document', an anti-trade union declaration, developed after the second world war in the context of skill shortage and intense building activity. Its use has been most common during periods of Labour Government, when employers have been concerned to evade regulations concerning their access to and responsibility for the employment of skilled labour. Stress is often laid on the operative's commitment to a 'fiddle' which ostensibly works so much in his favour. Independence and a spirit of free enterprise are sometimes cited as fundamental to the lumper's approach to work, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that this form of engagement has been accepted and survives within the industry because the employers see that it works primarily to their own advantage. Its use has fluctuated within recent years, not because the acquisitiveness of the operative has been modified,

but because the level and nature of building activities had declined in response to broader changes in economic and political life, and the requirements of the employers have been adjusted accordingly.

Questions of new technology and innovation in building processes are fundamentally related to the application of labour only sub-contracting. In other sectors of employment it has been accepted that systems of work and the division of labour are integrally related to the types of technology which are applied (11). But as far as construction is concerned labour-only has been treated as a separate factor from the division of labour and the level of technology of site operations (12). On the employers' side there was little need for 'scientific' methods of job organisation or evaluation if labour could be persuaded to tackle and complete a job with the maximum possible speed. It might be argued that the high cost of labour for the period when it was on site would offset any gain to the employer. But it is important to recognise the degree to which labour disputes could disrupt a programme of building operations, through disruption of deliveries which would put back schedules of work. The cost of labour-only might be offset if strikes (so common in the construction industry) could be avoided, but labour-only had further implications at a time when 'industrialisation' of Building formed a theme for speeches by politicians, employers and trade union leaders. If technological innovations were expensive, a rapid turnover - implying cost-effective use of labour could compensate for a failure to innovate. The maximisation of output - often, it has been asserted, at the cost of quality - with its concomitant reduction in labour costs per unit, was the employer's objective. And it could,

to some extent be satisfied by the application of labour-only, a simpler and more flexible means of reducing costs than experimentation with new methods and mechanisation. Conversely as an anti-trade union form of labour recruitment, the 'lump' allows the breach of demarcations which are accepted and upheld by trade union organisation. Whilst new materials may present problems for job allocation if trade union practices are observed, they are less likely to provide the focus for a dispute where lump labour is used. Labour-only sub-contracting varies in its mode and form of operation. It embraces both the individual workmen, engaged individually and the man 'employed' by a subbie as part of a gang. The flexibility allowed by LOSC was its major advantage to employers in a sector where the industrialisation of techniques proceeded both slowly and unevenly. LOSC was fundamentally hostile to the craft tradition, both in respect of the quality and the range of work which could be allocated to the individual operative. It could be applied both to the older trades, where it encouraged the process of deskilling and to the newer processes designed to supersede the traditional skills. But wherever it was applied its utilisation was contrived to undermine craft processes and craft organisation.

#### The Building Trades and Trade Union Structure

Discussions of trade union structure have tended to focus on the classification of types of organisation - the craft, occupational industrial or general unions being the types which are most commonly identified (13). Commentators have recognised the difficulties associated with allocating a union to a particular category and those difficulties are well reflected in the account which has been presented of trade union organisation in the building sector.

In all of the building trades, unions of the craft type emerged before 1914. The ASE provided the paradigm of the craft, 'sound amalgamated' principles of operation, with a relatively centralised control of finances. The model was followed by many - although by no means all of the craft societies which were in existence during the nineteenth century. The ASC&J was structured by Applegarth in accordance with the principles operated by the Engineers (14). And the major organisation of painters - the National Amalgamated Society of Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators, was formulated in 1886 along similar lines (15). But in the trowel trades - amongst the Masons and the Bricklayers, 'amalgamated principles' were not endorsed, and although the trend was towards the central control of finances, branches or lodges retained a greater degree of autonomy than persisted with the major organisations of carpenters or painters. If craft unions are defined by their exclusive characters, by their ability to control entry to the trade and the supply of labour, then reference must be made not only to the formal provisions of the union rulebooks, but also to the degree of organisation and relative strengths of the trades which were organised. Craft unionism was modified, not only by the inclusion of 'amalgamated principles' in its rulebook, but by the standing and degree of exclusivity associated with the craft on which it was based. The 'Amalgamated' principles of the ASE rulebook derived from the importance of the engineer in British industry in the mid 19th century - they both reflected and reinforced the standing of the craftsman. The formal similarities between the 'amalgamated principles' of the ASC&J and the NASOH&SP&D were in sharp contrast to the craft status of the carpenter and the painter.

H.A. Turner has noted that the use of craft or occupation to classify a trade union is limited by the fact that crafts and occupations are liable to change (16). As products are varied and new materials introduced so the boundaries of craft are shifted with processes incorporated into or excluded from the orbit of an individual craft. The shift in industrial production during wartime (1914-18) highlighted the extent to which craft processes might be redefined. As the delineation between crafts became blurred within the building trades, so there was a reassertion of craft status against the encroachment of the unskilled or the semi-skilled worker. Kindred trades drew together, not because they had abandoned their craft identity, but because it was threatened. And if the reformulation of rules and organisation seemed to posit a more open approach to questions of organisation, this must be understood in the light of wartime subversion of craft processes and status. The amalgamations of the period 1920-21 were mergers between kindred trade unions, working in the same or similar materials. But whilst they involved a reassertion of craft status, they involved a clear and significant move towards a form of trade union organisation defined in reference to general occupation, although set within a craft tradition. Whilst the AUBTW was formally more receptive to the semi-skilled than the ASW, the weight of craft tradition was felt in both cases.

It was craft identity as much as industrial logic which defined the formation of UCATT in 1971. The regrouping of construction unions during the 1960's followed the major demarcation established between craft and non-craft workers. It was around the major union which derived from the earlier craft societies - the ASW, that the new organisation was formed. And it grouped together, with few exceptions (notably the NAOF, the Plumbers

and the Scottish Slaters) those unions which shared craft origins in building production. The dynamic of industrial and political change had forced a wider pattern of recruitment on the unions concerned. An opening of the ranks to 'allied process workers' to women and - in the case of the AUBTW to the unskilled through the take-over of the NBL&CWS modified recruitment patterns although the attitude and leadership of a craft elite tended nonetheless to predominate. Such changes were made late (by comparison say with the engineers) and with little expressed enthusiasm for broadening the basis of organisation. Membership figures within the AUBTW where an unskilled section was established suggest that priority was not accorded to the recruitment and retention of unskilled members. UCATT was formed on the basis of a membership which was predominantly craft based. Regrouping came about in accordance with the prevailing organisational framework which tended to divide craft from non-craft workers. The distinction was blurred in practice by the emergence of the wide range of specialist trades whose work attracted plus payments on the labourer's rate. But it remained fundamental to the choice made by leaders of the unions which claimed a craft tradition to remain outside of the orbit of the general unions.

It was the general unions which provided the alternative framework for union organisation in building production. The Transport and General Workers Union in particular was designed to allow growth by assimilation as smaller bodies were drawn into its field. The national Trade Groups provided a simple structure within which to reconcile the sectional interests of a particular trade with the class identification of the union as a whole. The absorption of the Workers' Union in and the Builders' Labourers permitted its clear identification

as the major union recruiting amongst unskilled building workers. The philosophy of its leaders was oriented towards expansion and the redefinition of building processes assisted in this direction without directly challenging the rights of unions with a craft tradition to their established sphere of recruitment. The impact of technological innovation, taken in conjunction with IOSC forced the pace. The Perth Agreement had formalised the distinction between craft and non-craft workers so far as the question of trade union organisation was concerned. And the breakdown of this agreement symbolised not merely the blurring of the distinction between skilled and unskilled. It signified too the imminent restructuring of a union organisation which was founded on the handicraft work of an earlier era.

The classification of unions according to the scope of their recruitment has recognised limitations, which are as valid for building production as they are for other areas. The variations within the form accorded to the craft union have already been noted, and as unions have abandoned the principles which governed recruitment in their earlier stages, so the application of such terms must prove less satisfactory. Alternative criteria have been suggested as a means to evaluating trade union structure (17). The 'open' trade union does not impose restrictions on entry into the occupations amongst which it organises. It is likely to collaborate with management to establish itself within a plant and wage questions are fundamental to its operation. It is concerned with jurisdictional issues and adopts the form of the post-entry closed shop. It is the larger type of union and the Transport and General Workers Union undoubtedly provides the model of this type.

The 'closed' or smaller union, by contrast is based on the capacity to control the supply and price of labour in a particular occupation. For this reason there would be a concern to reserve certain jobs for its members, and to employ restrictive practices.

Yet the smaller union can be more open and the larger one more closed - as in the case of the ASC&J and the GUC&J prior to their amalgamation. And just as wider economic and social changes affected the scope for control over labour supply by a particular craft - and called into question the validity of the term itself, so those changes force a concomitant adjustment if the union is classified as 'closed' but adjusts to changes in the labour market by structural alterations which do not conform to its past pattern of operations. The difficulty with any classification of structure which fails to allow for the dynamic of historical change is that the classification will inevitably be bypassed by the effects of that change. Attempts to evolve a descriptive terminology which conveys the complex recruitment patterns of the larger organisations which now dominate the British trade union movement - 'hybrid', 'greater unionism' (18), have done little to remedy the defects of past forms of classification, which remain helpful at least to the extent that they indicate something of the origin and evolution of the trade unions which they describe.

The importance of a historical dimension to an understanding of union structure has recently been stressed:

'Union structure is not a fixed phenomenon but a process, the historical outcome of the interdependent but not purposefully integrated strategies of a variety of fragmented employee groups. Throughout the process of structural development,

two contradictory forces have operated: on the one hand towards breadth, unity and solidarity; on the other towards parochialism, sectionalism and exclusiveness.' (19)

The open and closed unions represent an abstraction, which contrasts the conflicting tendencies to breadth and openness on the one side, and to a closed exclusive character on the other. In the case of the building trade unions this has been evidenced in its most acute form by the contrast between the Transport and General Workers Union and those building trades' unions with a craft tradition which went to form UCATT. On the side of the T&GWU there was a breadth of organisation which was founded in general recruitment limited only by their Agreement with the craft societies.

And in the latter case, there was a tradition of exclusivity which, whilst it was modified over time, remained fundamental to the membership base on which UCATT was formed. The attitude towards the recruitment of women was symptomatic of the distinction which has been made, for the T&GWU recruited women from its inception, whilst the building craft societies always resisted recruitment in this area, despite the incursion of women into aspects of building production during the years of the second world war.

Notwithstanding the contrast with the T&GWU and also the G&MWU, the building trades organisations widened their sphere of operations over time - although the movement was slow and apparently reluctant. The relaxation of requirements concerning apprenticeship and years at the trade were matched only at a comparatively late stage by a willingness to recruit amongst

allied process workers. Whilst the AUBTW differed from the other trades in respect of its positive commitment to industrial solidarity, it was similarly restrictive in many of its recruitment practices and showed little determination to raise the level of its unskilled membership after the merger with the NBL&CWS. But it must be recognised that the building unions which have been considered were constrained by the existence and claims of rival organisations in many spheres of their operations. The separate existence of the NUFTO and the ASWM in woodworking, the claims of industrial unionism in the mines, where the NUM consolidated trade union organisation from 1948 and the formation of the NUPE recruiting at an 'industrial' level in the local authorities and hospitals undermined areas in which the 'closed' craft societies had assumed a certain presence. The short-lived 'industrial' union, the BWIU had little impact in this respect, since it generated only a tiny membership in the 10 years of its existence but its presence certainly encouraged the leadership of the existing craft societies towards a more 'open' and flexible view of their own role, from fear of its possible encroachments on their established territory.

Perhaps the most striking feature of trade union structure in building production was the existence of the NFBTO, one of the largest and most effective trade union federations. Brought into being in 1918, it survived for over fifty years and was superseded only by the formation of UCATT. For more than half a century it succeeded in providing a forum for the disparate organisations which recruited building trade workers. It was founded and led by the unions with craft traditions - notably the Woodworkers and the AUBTW, but it drew under its umbrella the general unions, unions of builders' labourers and unions

which represented workers in related sectors, such as furniture manufacture, having only a small minority of their members in building. In some ways it seemed reminiscent of the Operative Builders' Union of the 1830's. That body had been founded upon existing trade societies which were not merged, in the full sense, during its brief life. Similarly the NFBTO was founded by and relied on the affiliations of the existing trade unions in the field of building production. By its very success in reconciling the different and sometimes conflicting interests of its affiliates, it assured its standing and continued existence, precluding for many years the possibility of wider amalgamation. Within the framework of Federal activity the smaller craft societies were able to justify their separate and autonomous existence through co-operation on the key question of national, regional and local collective bargaining. And if collective action at this level seemed to undermine the value of their independence, they could refer to the separate representation of individual unions, additional to the representation allowed to the NFBTO, on the NJCBI. Federation allowed the perpetuation of different ranges of contributions and benefits; and it permitted the luxury of craft identification and pride to unions which could not afford isolation in their relationship with the employers. G.D.H. Cole, writing before the formation of the NFBTO suggested that the real test of a Federation is whether or not it will add to the collective bargaining power of the union (20). Most federations are unable to satisfy this test, but the NFBTO, with its key role within the NJCBI was an important exception.

The Federation provided a simple and effective solution to two major problems which beset the industrial union in building production. The first problem involved the difficulty of defini-

tion. What was the building industry and where were its boundaries? To what extent could workers in the mines, on the railways, in steel or the shipyards be defined as building workers? And how far could an industrial union extend its claims if building production was a feature of such widely differing industrial locations? The structure provided by the NFBTO was sufficiently loose to avoid the direct answer to this question which would have been necessitated by industrial unionism. The early period of national wage negotiation through the NW&CC was beset by difficulties associated with the extent to which the building trade rate should be applied to building trades operatives who were maintenance craftsmen in other industrial sectors. Since the building trade rate was, in that period higher than the rate for some other industries - for example engineering, but operatives working in those industries might not experience the disadvantages associated with building work - especially casual employment and poor working conditions, there was an incentive for them to claim the building rate. The flexible structure provided by the NFBTO allowed such questions to be decided in accordance with each particular case and unions could adjust their affiliation to the Federation in accordance with the estimated numbers of members who were in building production, without any attempt to define the situation of the individual operative. Secondly whilst a move from the shipbuilding to the housebuilding sector might have involved a change of union if industrial organisation provided the basis for trade union structure, this was not necessitated by the arrangement which allowed a craft worker to maintain his card whatever the industrial location in which he was employed (21).

If the Building Industry Agreement provided the main focus of

concern for the NFBTO, it was by no means the only national agreement in which the Federation was implicated. A major feature of the post-war Labour Government was the expansion of the public sector as a result both of nationalisation and the establishment of the National Health Service. The NFBTO had its part to play in negotiations in many areas in which its affiliates could claim members (unlike the TUC's Construction Committee which succeeded it). It was involved in negotiations in the steel industry, on the railways, in the health service and in companies where company bargaining was established - as at ICI and Courtaulds. Whilst in practice these negotiations largely involved individuals from particular unions - for the NFBTO never developed an extensive staff at national level - it was done in conjunction with the Federation's GS, and through the medium of the Federation. The conduct of industry-wide collective bargaining was the staple business of the Federation.

The NFBTO was essentially the vehicle for the defence and regulation of craft interests. It included the builders' labourers and the general workers only because they had been successful in establishing a separate body to deal with the related field of civil engineering, and in so doing had jeopardized the craft control which was a necessary prerequisite for the effective operation of the NFBTO. They were the Trojan Horse, capable, in the context of economic and technological changes, of threatening the power base occupied by the craft societies. The consolidation of a separate and distinct arena of activities in civil engineering paved the way for a challenge to craft organisation and policy throughout the field of construction activity.

If the NFBTO was primarily designed to represent craft interests, some attention must be given to the 'balance of power' between the different crafts. The diversity of organisation was matched by variety in size and one union - the ASW dominated the Federation, with only two serious contestants in the craft field - the AUBTW and the Painters, representing 66% and 50% respectively of the ASW's affiliated membership (1965 figs.). The problem did not replicate that within the CSEU where the AEU was by far the largest union. In that case arrangements were made from 1948 to scale down the Engineer's votes at the annual conference of the Confederation, so that the AEU did not hold an absolute majority (22). The problem did not arise in the NFBTO since although the ASW was the largest affiliate it represented under a third of the members. Its numerical superiority meant that in practice its views were most likely to prevail, for it could generally count on support from the majority of smaller craft societies. But support of this kind was not automatic - it required cajoling and threatening, using the ASW vote to support and maintain likely candidates in key positions within the Federation. And on some issues - where the craft unions were split on a problem, it was possible for the general unions, acting together to use the division in craft ranks to their own advantage - the most notable occasion being the defeat of the ASW on the question of pbr. The ASW - or its predecessor the ASC&J - had called into being a Federation which was usually, but not always a vehicle for the individual, craft based interests which it espoused. It commanded the official positions within the Federation more frequently than any other union, and in consequence proved able to keep a finger on the pulse of Federation activities. Just as the balance of forces within the TUC could not be discussed

without reference to the influence of the T&GWU, so within the NFBTO account must be made of the predominant influence of the ASW.

It was the decision within the ASW to dispense with the Federation which propelled its affiliates towards amalgamation. The moves from the ASW were in fact preceded by the merger of the NAOF into the T&GWU, within the broader context of the crisis of craft organisation which was apparent by the 60's. The importance of the ASW rested not only on its size, but on the pre-eminent position of its members within a craft hierarchy. However dramatic the impact of industrialised techniques and systems of work, they could not entirely bypass the controls associated with craft organisation in wood-working. But the threat which was posed was a serious one, and although Woodworkers suggested that their union was not affected to the same extent as others by the crisis, they had been allied to the other trades for too long to be unaffected or unconcerned by their decline. Moreover the evidence suggests that although the crisis in organisation hit them later than other trades, it hit them nonetheless hard. If the example of the Plasterers and the Scottish Slaters was not to be followed by other societies with a craft tradition, then that tradition had to be modified across craft lines. The unity of Federation could be preserved only by abolishing the form of Federation itself. Amalgamation, finally, was to replace federation.

The formation of UCATT was only one of a number of trade union mergers which marked the decade following the TUC's renewed initiative in 1963 in the field of trade union structure.

The successful amalgamation of the ETU and the PTU, the expansion of the AEU via the attachment of three unions recruiting in related areas - the Draughtsmen, the Constructional Engineers and the Foundry Workers, and the formation of the FTAT are just a few of the mergers which were effected. It is apparent that in this period, as in earlier years the state of the law in respect to requirements placed on amalgamating trade unions has been a key factor inhibiting or encouraging discussions and implementation of changes to trade union structure. There is clearly little point indulging in lengthy and complex negotiations regarding amalgamation if, at the end of those negotiations, change is precluded by legal requirements which cannot easily be fulfilled. Conversely it is only if discussions which have seemed promising to their participants have failed to reach fruition for this reason that pressures for change in the law are likely to be forthcoming.

Statutory requirements have been considerably eased since the Trade Union Act 1871 laid down that the approval of two thirds of the membership of each society was necessary before amalgamation could proceed. The instigation of a new form of merger - the transfer of engagements was designed to encourage smaller societies to accept amalgamation into the larger unions, without any requirement within the larger union for a ballot on the subject. The consequences of such a move are interesting in the case where the size of a smaller union is sufficient to swing an undecided vote on a key question within the larger union with which it is merging. And there are important consequences for union democracy if a union can more than double its numbers without any reference to its own members. Voting need take place only within the union

which is transferring engagements. But there is nothing sacrosanct about the transfer itself. Special arrangements which are allowed at the time of the transfer need not be upheld in perpetuity. Adjustments to the forms and constitution governing organisation are subsequently inevitable and at the time when they are pending members who have transferred in will find themselves in a minority in opposing changes which counter their position as agreed at the time of the transfer. The changed legal requirement - to be amended by a provision for reimbursement for the cost of ballots on amalgamation in the Employment Act, 1980, reflect the shift of view amongst employers on the subject of trade union structure during the course of the century. Whilst industrial unity seemed before 1914, to pose a threat to their industrial and social control, it has been clear, at least since the first world war, that there is no necessary equation between the size of a union and its militancy. It is now employers, at least as often as trade unionists, who deplore the consequences of multi-unionism, and the question of a reduction in the number of trade unions has become a reference point as part of a projected solution to the 'crisis in industrial relations' in recent years.

One of the most widely quoted statements concerning trade union structure has been George Woodcock's assertion the 'structure is a function of purpose.'(23) It has been argued that this statement has more relevance to the nineteenth than to the twentieth century.

The purpose of trade unions may be to maintain and improve conditions of work for its members as the Webbs suggested, but it is the method by which that end is pursued which is important to the evaluation of Woodcock's statement. The early craft union adopted a method of unilateral regulation which sought to impose standards of pay and conditions of work for its members who were, for the most part, apprentice-trained craftsmen.

"The aim of the traditional craft union could be seen as the fashioning of a single massive work group co-terminous with the trade, its authority dependent on the united action of its members in imposing standard terms on the trade, and its unity supported by the equal treatment and protection they received from the union. This method dictated union structure." (24)

But as unilateral regulation was by-passed by the development of collective bargaining involving the joint regulation of pay and conditions by employers and unions together, so the unions' method of controlling pay and conditions became less significant as the defining feature of union structure. The union could effectively control conditions without maintaining a form of organisation which was co-terminous with trade. Several different trades could be recruited by the same union, whilst the joint regulation of pay and conditions could be pursued through a variety of organisational forms. It would seem then, from this account, that structure was a function of purpose for as long as craft unions pursued their objectives through the unilateral regulation of conditions, but that with the development of collective bargaining, the purpose of trade union organisation ceased to define the shape of that organisation.

The craft origins of building trade unions have proved fundamental to the subsequent form and adaptations of structure as well as to their shape in the 19th Century. It is not only that the early development of the craft societies was defined by the unilateral regulation of conditions within each trade. It is also that each craft had an identity and a craft pride which survived the impact of industrial changes, moulding the form and the outlook of trade unions which operated in the

changed bargaining arrangements which followed the first world war. Unilateral regulation was effective for the building trades, insofar as it relied solely on the capacity of union members to organise and impose their standards. Collective bargaining was less so, for it relied on the capacity and willingness of employers to co-operate in its implementation, and both have been shown to be lacking.

### Conclusion

The 'One Big Union' erected so carefully in the literature of building trade unionism bore little relation, when finally it was created, to the aspirations of industrial unionists. Doctrines concerned with the reformulation of trade union structure envisaged that this would occur, in defiance of the general secretaries of the craft societies, rather than through their support. But just as the Operative Builders Union, contrary to the account supplied by the Webbs, had not really challenged the autonomy of its affiliated craft sections, so UCATT, on its formation, did not challenge the traditions of craft organisation embodied in its major constituent unions. The 'One Big Union' may, on occasion have been the 'vision which inspired' but it was not the consideration which informed negotiations on amalgamation in the 1960's.

It was not that ideology played no part in discussions of amalgamation. Political sympathies and allegiances were fundamental to negotiations and in the absence of other major considerations might impede or encourage their successful conclusion. Adherents of a political philosophy which paid lip service to the notion of industrial unionism were more likely to oppose than to support an amalgamation with a union

which had more conservative traditions, and a right wing leadership. And so, on occasion the 'vision which inspired' served to separate rather than to unite trade unions within the building industry. George Smith, like his predecessors as GS of the ASU, looked for allegiances which would strengthen the conservative tendency for which that union was known. But political considerations were balanced, finally, by the logic of craft organisation as the barriers were broken down by the T&GWU.

It was this same question of political identity which defined the approach to the issue of government within the individual unions. Leading officials were concerned to perpetuate and strengthen their own influence within the democratic machine. The priorities of union organisation, when the question was viewed from national head office, were very different from the priorities of the activist concerned to organise on site. Questions of finance and administration were central to the national official, whilst for the militant it was the question of boosting site trade union organisation against the blacklist which took priority. At one level it is apparent that there was no fundamental conflict of interests, for the union relied on the activists to recruit and to renew membership. But at another level it is clear that the perspective of national officials was governed by their emphasis on the smooth-running of the organisation. Control of policy and of finance was their objective and the long-term adjustments which they proposed were designed to foster that control. The political machinations of left and right tended then to the capture of positions which could enhance their influence. If amalgamation could strengthen this process, it was used to that end.

No one factor, taken alone can provide a sufficient explanation of the pattern of mergers which has been described. Political identities, the ambitions of officials, the impact of new processes of production or labour-only cannot, in isolation account for the nature or scope of the mergers which were finally effected. The logic of political decisions, of the conscious actions of leading officials within each of the unions concerned, must be balanced in the final analysis by reference to the over-all context in which those actions and decisions were taken. The construction process itself is central to an understanding of the form assumed by the trade union movement within it. The survival in the second half of the twentieth century of a form of trade union organisation which might not have seemed out of place a century earlier can be explained only by reference to the slow pace of change in building production, both in technology and in the division of labour. The reality of craft operations was paralleled by the survival of craft organisation in an industry where innovation was inhibited by the limited advantages of capital investment and the long survival of small-scale units of production. It was Connelly, rather than Postgate or Hilton (cited at the beginning of the introduction) who made the most realistic assessment on the question of trade union structure. In 1959 carpenters and joiners were not ready to end their century old organisation. The craft tradition still played a part within the trade union movement. The changes in the construction process, the 'industrialisation' of the building industry and along with it the application of labour-only as a means of facilitating labour supply had not finally broken down the barriers between woodworkers, bricklayers and painters. The changed environment for trade union

organisation in construction was an essential pre-requisite for a reformulation of trade union structure.

APPENDIX A. Hourly wage rates in building, compared with the engineering industry.

It is intended in this appendix to compare hourly wage rates in the building and the engineering industries during the 20th century. National collective bargaining was effective in both industries from the first world war, although some variation according to district was sustained for much of the period in each case and a 'super-rate' is still maintained within the building industry agreement, today.

A presentation of wage rates in the two industries does not of course illustrate the relationship between earnings in building and engineering. Payment by results has been an accepted feature of payments within the engineering industry throughout this century and although not all workers in engineering are paid on this basis, pbr or lieu payments represent an important component of earnings for many. Payment by results was accepted within the building industry only in the years after the second world war, so that wage rates for the earlier period may be taken as a reliable indicator of the basis on which earnings were constructed. Many employers have been reluctant to implement pbr schemes in the building industry and if 'lump' workers are excluded from the calculations, it is probable that only a minority of building workers were in receipt of a payment additional to the nationally negotiated rate at any time during these years.

The regularity of employment is an important factor affecting comparisons between the building and the engineering industries. The casual nature of employment within many parts of the building industry meant that an operative could not expect that

his earnings would be based on his hourly rate multiplied by the number of hours in the normal working week. The susceptibility of operations to disruption by inclement weather increased the likelihood that earnings would be based on something less than the full number of hours. Even after the introduction of the guaranteed week during the second world war the number of hours guaranteed was less (32) than the number of hours in the normal working week (around 44).

Although wage rates\* in the building industry are shown to be consistently higher, on an hourly basis than those in the engineering industry, this conclusion cannot be extended to earnings. The New Earnings Survey, 1968 showed earnings in building trades to be consistently lower than in engineering trades. Whereas at this time 66.4% of painters and 63.1% of bricklayers sampled earned less than £24 p.w., the proportion of engineering fitters and turners earning under this figure was much lower. Only 37.6% of maintenance fitters and 41.5% of production fitters earned less than £24 p.w. Of the toolroom men only 34.2% were below this sum, by contrast with 59.1% of carpenters. Whereas approximately one third of bricklayers, carpenters & painters received less than £20 p.w. only 12.6% of maintenance fitters, 18.3% of production fitters and 8.1% of toolroom fitters were below this level.

\*Wage data presented in this appendix was extracted from the British Labour statistics: Historical abstract, 1886-1968.

The figures for the engineering industry were there presented on a weekly basis and the hourly figure has been calculated on the assumption that the weekly rate represented the payment for the normal number of hours in the basic working week. Figures have been calculated to the nearest farthing in each case.

Glasgow: Wage Rates (Hourly)

		Bricklayers		Fitters		Bricklayers as % of fitters' rate
		Rate	Hours	Rate	Hours	
1900	Jan	0.10d	51	0.8 $\frac{1}{4}$ d	54	121.2%
1906	Oct <sup>1</sup>	0.9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	51	0.7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	56 $\frac{1}{2}$	126.7%
1910	Oct	0.9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	51	0.7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d	56 $\frac{1}{2}$	122.6%
1914	Oct	0.10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	50	0.8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d	56 $\frac{1}{2}$	120.0%
1920	Dec <sup>2</sup>	2.4	44	1.11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	47	119.1%
1924	Apr	1.7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	1.1 $\frac{1}{4}$ d	47	147.1%
1926	Apr	1.8d	44	1.2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	47	137.9%
1930	Apr	1.8d	44	1.4d	47	125%
1938	Apr	1.8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	1.6d	47	113.9%
1945	Apr	2.2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	2.1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	47	104.0%
1950	Apr	2.10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	2.6 $\frac{1}{4}$ d	44	114.0%
1955	Apr	4.0d	44	3.7 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	110.3%
1960	Apr	4.11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	4.6 $\frac{1}{4}$ d	42	109.7%
1965	Apr	6.6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	40	5.3d	41	124.6%
1968	Apr	7.8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	40	6.5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d	40	119.7%

<sup>1</sup> 1906 figs. for building industry for October, for engineering - January.

<sup>2</sup> 1920 figs. for building industry - December, for engineering - April.

Birmingham: Wage Rates (Hourly)

		Bricklayers		Fitters		Bricklayers as % of fitters' rate
		Rate	Hours	Rate	Hours	
1900	Jan	0.9½d	54	0.8½d	53	115.2%
1906	Oct <sup>1</sup>	0.9½d	54	0.8½d	53	115.2%
1910	Oct	0.9½d	54	0.9½d	48	102.7%
1914	Oct	0.10½d	54	0.8½d	53	123.5%
1920	Dec <sup>2</sup>	2.4d	44	1.9¾d	47	128.7%
1924	Apr	1.7½d	44	1.2¼d	47	136.8%
1926	Apr	1.8d	46½ (& 44 winter)	1.2¼d	47	140.4%
1930	Apr	1.7d	46½ "	1.2¾d	47	128.8%
1938	Apr	1.7½d	46½ "	1.4¾d	47	116.4%
1945	Apr	2.1d	46½ "	2.0½d	47	102.0%
1950	Apr	2.10½d	46½ "	2.5½d	44	117.9%
1955	Apr	4.0d	46½ "	3.6½d	44	112.9%
1960	Apr	4.11½d	44	4.5½d	42	111.7%
1965	Apr	6.5½d	41	5.2d	41	125%
1968	Apr	7.8½d	40	6.5½d	40	119.7%

<sup>1</sup> 1906 figs. for building industry for October, for engineering - January.

<sup>2</sup> 1920 figs. for building industry - December, for engineering - April.

London: Wage Rates (Hourly)

		Bricklayers		Fitters		Bricklayers as a % of fitters' rate
		Rate	Hours	Rate	Hours	
1900	Jan	0.10d	50	0.8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	54	117.6%
1906	Oct <sup>1</sup>	0.10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	50	0.8 $\frac{3}{4}$ d	48/54	107.7%
1910	Oct	0.10 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	50	0.9d/10d	48/54	105.0%
1914	Oct	0.11 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	50	0.9d/10d	48/54	115.0%
1920	Dec <sup>2</sup>	2.4d	44	1.11d	47	121.7%
1924	Apr	1.8d	44	1.3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	47	129.0%
1926	Apr	1.9 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	1.3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	47	138.7%
1930	Apr	1.8 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	1.4d	47	128.1%
1938	Apr	1.9d	44	1.6d	47	116.7%
1945	Apr	2.2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	2.1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d	47	102.9%
1950	Apr	3.0d	44	2.6 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	118.0%
1955	Apr	4.1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	44	3.7 $\frac{3}{4}$ d	44	113.1%
1960	Apr	5.1d	44	4.6 $\frac{3}{4}$ d	42	111.4%
1965	Apr	6.7d	41	5.3 $\frac{1}{4}$ d	41	124.9%
1968	Apr	7.10d	40	6.5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d	40	121.7%

<sup>1</sup> 1906 figs. for building industry - October, for engineering - January

<sup>2</sup> 1920 figs. for building industry - December, for engineering - April.

Liverpool: Wage Rates (Hourly)

		Bricklayers		Fitters		Bricklayers as % of fitters' rate
		Rate	Hours	Rate	Hours	
1900	Jan	9½d	49½	0.8½d	53	115.2%
1906	Oct <sup>1</sup>	9½d	49½	0.8½d	53	115.2%
1910	Oct	10d	46½	0.8½d	53	117.6%
1914	Oct	11d	46½	0.8¾d	53	125.7%
1920	Dec <sup>2</sup>	2.4d	44	1.9¾d	47	128.7%
1924	Apr	1.9d	44	1.2½d	47	144.8%
1926	Apr	1.9d	44	1.2½d	47	144.8%
1930	Apr	1.9d	44	1.2¾d	47	142.4%
1938	Apr	1.8½d	44	1.4¾d	47	122.4%
1945	Apr	2.1d	44	2.0½d	47	102.0%
1950	Apr	3.0d	44	2.5¼d	44	122.0%
1955	Apr	4.1½d	44	3.6½d	44	116.5%
1960	Apr	5.1d	44	4.5½d	42	114.6%
1965	Apr	6.7d	41	5.2d	41	127.4%
1968	Apr	7.10d	40	6.5¼d	40	121.7%

<sup>1</sup> 1906 figs. for building industry for October; for engineering - January.

<sup>2</sup> 1920 figs. for building industry for December; for engineering - April.

APPENDIX B. Unemployment in construction, 1900-1939.

The intention in this appendix is to indicate seasonal and cyclical fluctuations in employment in construction in the United Kingdom between 1900 and 1939. The percentage of the insured who were unemployed is detailed for the months of January and July in each year. The information was extracted from the Board of Trade Labour Gazette subsequently The Ministry of Labour Gazette. Industrial definitions were adapted and developed over this period so that the form of the information and the degree of detail varies over the period under consideration. The data provides nonetheless a basis on which the impact of unemployment can be assessed. It is particularly detailed for the inter-war years when the question of unemployment was a critical one.

	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul
Carpenters & Joiners)				
Plumbers )	2.7	1.8	4.7	3.0
		1900		1901
		1902		1903
Carpenters & Joiners	5.6	2.9	6.5	3.3
Plumbers	5.8	6.5	6.4	6.7
		1904		1905
Carpenters & Joiners	7.7	5.7	11.6	6.5
Plumbers	9.3	10.5	10.9	10.1
		1906		1907
Carpenters & Joiners	10.1	5.3	8.2	5.0
Plumbers	12.1	8.9	6.7	8.8
		1908		1909
Carpenters & Joiners	12.3	11.1	16.3	Jun/Jul 10.0
Plumbers	9.0	11.9	10.3	14.6
		1910		1911
Carpenters & Joiners	14.4	5.5	9.5	3.0
Plumbers	11.7	10.3	11.2	7.6
		1912		1913
Carpenters & Joiners	5.4	3.4	5.6	2.4
Plumbers	4.8	7.1	6.4	7.8
		1914		
		N/A		

	1915		1916	
	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul
Carpenters & Joiners	1.7	2.4	1.1	1.2
Bricklayers	5.3	2.4	1.9	1.3
Masons	7.0	2.6	2.7	1.4
Plasterers	10.5	3.1	5.5	2.8
Painters	12.8	1.8	6.6	0.8
Plumbers	2.1	1.5	1.0	0.6
Labourers	2.7	1.2	1.0	0.7
Other skilled occs.		1.5	1.0	0.6
Navvies	<u>        </u>	<u>0.8</u>	<u>0.4</u>	<u>0.4</u>
Total	4.5	1.7	2.0	0.9

	1917		1918	
	Carpenters & Joiners	0.64	1.03	0.41
Bricklayers	1.14	0.80	0.26	0.20
Masons	2.00	1.07	0.80	0.49
Plasterers	3.31	2.16	2.34	0.72
Painters	3.94	0.52	2.41	0.40
Plumbers	0.42	0.61	0.24	0.41
Other skilled	0.60	0.59	0.46	0.32
Navvies	0.38	0.72	0.48	0.82
Labourers	<u>0.77</u>	<u>0.83</u>	<u>0.68</u>	<u>0.75</u>
Total	1.27	0.82	0.80	0.55

	1919		1920	
	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul
Carpenters	3.31	5.38	1.16	0.37
Bricklayers	8.4	8.72	1.05	0.23
Masons	9.21	14.92	4.03	1.01
Slaters & Tilers	13.89	23.20	5.78	0.92
Plasterers	6.51	2.83	8.98	2.30
Painters	3.57	8.72	3.59	2.01
Plumbers	6.65	11.86	5.12	2.50
Labourers	6.65	8.19	4.81	2.23
Other	<u>6.45</u>	<u>10.55</u>	<u>6.40</u>	<u>3.39</u>
Total	6.22	8.64	5.04	2.19

	1921		1922	
	Carpenters	* Nos only are given	8.57	9.9
Bricklayers	owing to changes in	5.39	13.6	10.0
Masons	industrial classifica-	7.48	17.7	8.6
Slaters & Tilers	tion Nov	-	-	-
Plasterers	1920. Figs are not	2.48	4.1	6.6
Painters	comparable with	13.90	30.6	11.1
Plumbers	earlier period.	8.34	10.6	10.7
Other Skilled occs.		10.77	} 27.8	} 21.0
Navvies		15.78		
Labourers		<u>22.50</u>	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u>
Total		15.40	22.3	15.2

	1923		1924	
	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul
Carpenters	11.6	No figs. given on a trade basis	4.8	2.9
Bricklayers	12.8		2.3	2.3
Masons	10.2		4.1	2.5
Slaters & Tilers	15.8		6.6	6.1
Plasterers	16.7		4.5	3.2
Painters	30.6		31.1	9.7
Plumbers	12.4		7.2	6.6
Labourers	24.4		14.7	11.0
Other	<u>19.9</u>		<u>27.2</u>	<u>25.2</u>
Total	20.3		15.1	9.9

	1925		1926	
	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jun/Jul
Carpenters	3.1	2.0	7.1	4.9
Bricklayers	2.0	1.2	4.9	3.2
Masons	4.4	2.4	10.1	7.5
Slaters & Tilers	4.3	4.6	10.6	5.5
Plasterers	2.3	1.4	3.2	1.8
Painters	27.7	8.6	30.1	9.3
Plumbers	5.6	5.9	8.0	9.6
Labourers to above	12.1	8.9	15.9	12.1
Other	<u>26.7</u>	<u>21.3</u>	<u>16.1</u>	<u>13.4</u>
Total	13.2	8.2	14.9	9.6

	1927		1928	
	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul
Carpenters	8.6	3.2	13.5	6.6
Bricklayers	7.2	1.7	12.6	5.9
Masons	11.0	4.4	13.7	6.5
Slaters & Tilers	10.6	4.0	10.7	8.4
Plasterers	5.0	1.7	19.2	9.5
Painters	29.3	8.3	30.6	9.0
Plumbers	9.6	7.2	7.9	9.3
Labourers to above	15.9	9.5	16.8	12.5
Other	<u>16.3</u>	<u>11.3</u>	<u>17.2</u>	<u>14.6</u>
Total	15.2	7.5	17.4	10.5

	1929		1930	
	Carpenters	11.9	4.1	13.6
Bricklayers	15.8	2.6	12.9	6.8
Masons	17.2	4.6	10.9	7.2
Slaters & Tilers	18.5	9.4	11.5	15.0
Plasterers	18.5	4.2	22.6	10.9
Painters	33.7	7.8	32.0	14.5
Plumbers	10.5	7.1	11.4	15.8
Labourers to above	21.0	11.3	17.9	14.9
Other	<u>19.9</u>	<u>13.1</u>	<u>19.1</u>	<u>19.3</u>
Total	19.9	8.8	18.5	14.0

	1931		1932	
	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul
Carpenters	23.7	17.6	29.5	25.3
Bricklayers	21.3	11.2	28.1	25.2
Masons	21.2	12.5	25.7	21.8
Slaters & Tilers	27.7	18.9	28.8	31.0
Plasterers	26.8	18.1	30.2	29.8
Painters	46.1	22.5	52.6	28.1
Plumbers	20.8	21.3	26.0	26.5
Labourers to above	25.1	19.4	30.2	27.2
Other	<u>25.2</u>	<u>20.6</u>	<u>31.4</u>	<u>30.5</u>
Total	27.0	18.9	32.8	27.6

	1933		1934	
	Carpenters	31.2	15.3	17.7
Bricklayers	39.8	10.3	14.3	5.0
Masons	37.8	17.6	23.7	14.9
Slaters & Tilers	35.5	16.7	23.6	15.8
Plasterers	45.5	12.5	14.7	6.8
Painters	51.1	22.3	42.3	16.5
Plumbers	28.4	18.3	17.8	13.7
Labourers to above	36.0	22.0	25.4	17.2
Other	<u>36.4</u>	<u>28.8</u>	<u>32.3</u>	<u>31.0</u>
Total	37.7	20.8	26.2	17.2

	1935		1936	
	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul
Carpenters	15.3	6.9	13.4	4.4
Bricklayers	15.0	3.2	26.3	3.3
Masons	23.0	10.9	26.9	6.3
Slaters & Tilers	23.9	14.1	32.1	9.9
Plasterers	20.5	5.8	30.2	4.4
Painters	37.8	14.1	38.8	9.9
Plumbers	15.8	11.0	12.1	8.2
Labourers to above	24.0	14.8	27.1	11.3
Navvies & Gen. Lab.	40.0	32.6	46.1	27.2
Other	<u>25.8</u>	<u>23.9</u>	<u>27.5</u>	<u>21.2</u>
Total	25.1	15.0	28.1	12.0

	1937		1938	
	Jan	Jul	Jan	Jul
Carpenters	8.5	5.4	10.7	6.8
Bricklayers	7.5	4.4	10.9	6.9
Masons	12.1	6.2	12.1	7.2
Slaters & Tilers	11.7	9.6	18.7	11.2
Plasterers	10.6	6.3	14.8	9.2
Painters	31.9	10.2	35.6	13.8
Plumbers	9.5	7.7	10.0	9.1
Labourers to above.	15.0	10.2	15.2	12.0
Navvies & Gen. Lab.	30.9	23.7	32.4	29.7
Other	<u>23.1</u>	<u>19.5</u>	<u>23.7</u>	<u>21.8</u>
Total	17.9	11.3	19.5	13.8

1939

	Jan	Jul
Carpenters	15.0	3.3
Bricklayers	19.4	7.3
Masons	18.8	7.3
Slaters & Tilers	23.8	11.7
Plasterers	22.5	14.7
Painters	37.6	12.0
Plumbers	8.0	7.5
Labourers to above	18.6	9.2
Navvies & Gen. Lab.	40.4	23.7
Other	<u>30.2</u>	<u>20.4</u>
Total	23.9	11.3

Comparable figs. not available during war years.

It was announced in Ministry of Labour Gazette 1940 that statistics relating to the no. & % of insured persons unemployed in particular industries was suspended.

APPENDIX C. MEMBERSHIP OF THE MAJOR BUILDING TRADE UNIONS  
 IN GREAT BRITAIN, 1900 - 1970.

AMALG. SOC. OF CARPENTERS & JOINERS		Amalg. Carpenters, Cabinet Makers & Joiners (1918) (G	
1892	37,588	1918	102,069
1893	40,996	1919	113,743
1894	43,041		
1895	44,155		
1896	45,550		
1897	49,895		
1898	53,377		
1899	57,750		
1900	60,264		
1901	61,222		
1902	61,605		
1903	62,364		
1904	62,212		
1905	59,270		
1906	54,435		
1907	54,539		
1908	50,119		
1909	45,386		
1910	45,347		
1911	51,419		
1912	60,071		
1913	66,380		
1914	69,036		
1915	74,212		
1916	74,553		
1917	83,641		

AMALGAMATED SOCIETY OF WOODWORKERS (GREAT BRITAIN)

1920	124,526	1951	179,421
1921	124,831	1952	179,686
1922	115,395	1953	179,008
1923	103,993	1954	178,628
1924	102,012	1955	180,832
1925	107,056	1956	180,855
1926	107,658	1957	181,060
1927	109,604	1958	177,274
1928	108,609	1959	174,148
1929	109,909	1960	175,390
1930	108,861	1961	177,439
1931	106,217	1962	177,452
1932	99,709	1963	175,215
1933	93,871	1964	173,563
1934	94,760	1965	174,263
1935	102,839	1966	170,816
1936	111,897	1970	163,345
1937	120,572		
1938	128,469		
1939	142,268		
1940	140,724		
1941	146,196		
1942	153,092		
1943	157,031		
1944	158,584		
1945	165,339		
1946	184,255		
1947	185,999		
1948	183,930		
1949	180,849		
1950	179,936		

NAT. AMALG. (HOUSE & SHIP) PAINTERS & DECORATORS (GB)

1892	4,194			1923	47,752
1893	5,927			1924	42,999
1894	6,528			1925	39,423
1895	6,754			1926	37,268
1896	7,690			1927	36,366
1897	8,344			1928	34,879
1898	9,166			1929	35,290
1899	10,185			1930	35,304
1900	10,448	1931	34,398	1935	33,270
1901	10,833	1932	30,373	1936	37,166
1902	11,185	1933	28,063	1937	39,711
1903	11,077	1934	30,138	1938	42,588
1904	16,056 <sup>(1)</sup>			1939	43,524
1905	16,542			1940	39,441
1906	16,519			1941	38,803
1907	17,377			1942	40,763
1908	17,462			1943	41,953
1909	16,619			1944	41,326
1910	14,909			1945	46,245
1911	16,145			1946	63,876
1912	21,595			1947	69,369
1913	30,158			1948	71,133
1914	29,796			1949	71,576
1915	28,293			1950	70,473
1916	28,728			1951	68,240
1917	31,029			1952	66,576
1918	37,502			1953	65,123
1919	62,147			1954	64,264
1920	73,478			1955	63,818
1921	61,984			1956	63,100
1922	51,692			1957	61,631

Nat. Amalg. (House & Ship) Painters & Decorators (GB) continued...

1958	61,265
1959	60,834
1960	59,770
1961	59,869
1962	59,433
1963 <sup>(2)</sup>	74,391
1964	71,895
1965	70,038
1966	67,697
1970	57,550.

(1) Following the merger of the London and Manchester societies.

(2) Plus Scottish Painters Society\*

OPERATIVE STONEMASONS SOCIETY OF ENGLAND & WALES

1892	16,238
1893	16,683
1894	16,768
1895	16,174
1896	16,223
1897	16,701
1898	18,116
1899	19,079
1900	19,419
1901	18,684
1902	17,805
1903	17,140
1904	16,303
1905	14,981
1906	13,245
1907	11,442
1908	9,596
1909	7,849
1910	7,055
1911	7,643
1912	8,079
1913	10,664
1914	10,548
1915	7,565
1916	4,882
1917	4,625
1918	5,384
1919	13,133
1920	17,958

OPERATIVE BRICKLAYERS SOCIETY

1892	22,270
1893	22,253
1894	23,557
1895	24,123
1896	26,289
1897	29,755
1898	33,310
1899	36,491
1900	38,830
1901	38,743
1902	38,410
1903	37,821
1904	35,488
1905	32,830
1906	31,267
1907	30,504
1908	28,495
1909	25,008
1910	23,284
1911	22,468
1912	24,633
1913	29,034
1914	26,363
1915	27,036
1916	26,481
1917	28,603
1918	34,441
1919	43,365
1920	53,719

AMALGAMATED UNION OF BUILDING TRADE WORKERS (GB)

1921	75,779	1951	79,545
1922	64,175	1952	93,362
1923	59,131	1953	95,205
1924	57,410	1954	94,709
1925	58,520	1955	94,758
1926	59,202	1956	94,652
1927	59,434	1957	90,772
1928	55,926	1958	84,627
1929	55,839	1959	85,211
1930	54,281	1960	84,986
1931	54,760	1961	83,954
1932	51,095	1962	80,412
1933	49,228	1963	80,218
1934	50,043	1964	78,126
1935	53,238	1965	74,207
1936	57,	1966	70,564
1937	62,211	1970	61,097
1938	65,819		
1939	64,619		
1940	66,502		
1941	68,808		
1942	72,247		
1943	69,402		
1944	67,113		
1945	69,962		
1946	79,125		
1947	88,566		
1948	84,001		
1949	80,776		
1950	79,162		

APPENDIX D: Trade union density in construction, 1901-71.

Woodworkers (GB)

	<u>TU Membership</u>		<u>No. in employment</u>	<u>Density</u>	
1901	ASC&J	61,222	Total 79,826	301,993	26.43%
	GUC&J	7,301			
	Ass. C&J of S *	8,785			
	Amalg. Cab.	2,518			
* Merged with ASC&J in 1910).					
1911	ASC&J	51,419	Total 60,327	234,014	25.78%
	GUC&J	6,218			
	Amalg. Cab.	2,690			
1921		124,831	220,662	56.57%	
1931		106,217	260,545	39.15%	
1951		179,421	282,076	63.6%	
1961		177,439	300,590	59.0%	
1971		163,345	294,120	55.53%	

There are difficulties in estimating density in woodworking because the membership of the ASW includes tradesmen employed in shipbuilding. Woodworkers in shipbuilding are not included in the fig. for workforce size and the consequence is that density is consistently over-estimated.

No allowance has been made for 1961 and before of the membership of the NUPCM. This union merged with the ASW in the 1960's so the decline in density between 1961 and 1971 is slightly understated.

Bricklayers & Masons

<u>TU Membership</u>		<u>Workforce Size</u> (Bricklayers & Masons)		<u>Density</u>
<u>1901</u>				
OBS	38,743	Total 68,472	Bricklayers Masons	Total 202,782
MUOB	3,136			
OSM	18,684			
Scottish Masons	7,909			
				33.76%
<u>1911</u>				
OBS	22,468	Total 33,168	Bricklayers Masons	Total 153,410
MUOB	1,557			
OSM	7,643			
Scottish Masons	1,500			
				21.62%
<u>1921</u>				
AUBTW	75,779	81,270	Bricklayers Masons	Total 121,589
B&MWAS	5,491			
				66.83%
<u>1931</u>				
AUBTW	54,760	59,959	Bricklayers Masons	Total 164,511
B&MWAS	5,199			
				36.44%
<u>1951</u>				
AUBTW	79,545		Bricklayers Masons	Total 171,568
			148,603 22,965	46.4%
<u>1961</u>				
AUBTW	83,954		Bricklayers Masons	Total 253,200
			233,860 19,360	38.5%
<u>1971</u>				
Bricklayers	57,172		Bricklayers Masons	Total 111,510
			98,300 13,210	35.5%

Painters

	<u>TU Membership</u>		<u>Workforce Size</u>	<u>Density</u>	
1901	NASOH&SP&D (Manchester)	10,833	Total 19,241	159,285	12.0%
	AHD&P (London)	5,380			
	Scottish Painters	3,028			
1911	ASP&D	16,145	19,079	175,520	10.9%
	Scottish Painters	2,934			
1921	ASP&D	61,984	69,255	152,167	45.5%
	Scottish Painters	7,271			
1931	English Painters	34,398	41,163	20,905	19.7%
	Scottish Painters	6,765			
1951	English Painters	68,240	81,908	247,033	33.2%
	Scottish Painters	13,668			
1961	English Painters	59,869	71,981	335,850	21.4%
	Scottish Painters	12,112			
1971 (Dec 1969)			59,961	287,800	20.8%

Abbreviations: Organisations

ABT	Association of Building Technicians
AC&JS	Associated Carpenters and Joiners (Scotland)
AGS	Assistant General Secretary
ASC&J	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners
ASCC&J	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters, Cabinet Makers and Joiners
ASHD&F	Amalgamated Society of House Decorators and Painters
ASP&D	Amalgamated Society of Painters and Decorators
ASTRO	Amalgamated Slaters, Tilers and Roofing Operators
ASW	Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers
ASWM	Amalgamated Society of Woodcutting Machinists
AUBTW	Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers
AUCM	Amalgamated Union of Cabinet Makers
B&MWAS	Building and Monumental Workers Association of Scotland
BWIU	Building Workers Industrial Union
CP	Communist Party of Great Britain
CEU	Constructional Engineering Union
DC	District Committee
EC	Executive Council
ETU	Electrical Trades Union
FTAT	Furniture Timber and Allied Trades Union
GC	General Council
G&MWU	General and Municipal Workers Union
GS	General Secretary
GUC&J	General Union of Carpenters and Joiners
LBTF	London Building Trades Federation
LP	Labour Party
MC	Management Committee
MUOB	Manchester Unity Operative Bricklayers

NAFTA	National Amalgamated Furniture Trades Association
NAOP	National Association of Operative Plasterers
NASOH&SP&D	National Amalgamated Society of Operative House and Ship Painters and Decorators
NB	National Builder
NBL	New Builders Leader
NBL&CWS	National Builders Labourers and Constructional Workers Society
NFBTE	National Federation of Building Trades Employers
NFBTO	National Federation of Building Trades Operatives
NJCBI	National Joint Council for the Building Industry
NSP	National Society of Painters
NUFTO	National Union of Furniture Trades Operatives
NUPCM	National Union of Packing Case Makers
NW&CC	National Wages and Conditions Council
OBS	Operative Bricklayers Society
OSM	Operative Stonemasons Society
PTU	Plumbing Trades Union
UBLU	United Builders Labourers Union

Abbreviations: Publications

- AR - Annual Report
- HMM - History of the Ministry of Munitions
- MJ - Monthly Journal
- MR - Monthly Report
- NB - National Builder
- OB - Operative Builder
- PP - Parliamentary Papers
- TC - Trade Circular
- IOSC - Labour-only sub-contracting

## Sources

The construction industry is particularly rich in surviving records of its various trade unions many of them preserved in The Modern Records Centre, University Library, Warwick. The wealth of detail, both of printed materials and of manuscript records more strictly defined, means that the student is confronted with an *embarassement de richesse*. Minute books, accounts, correspondence, printed reports and other papers survive from many of the organisations which are mentioned in the text of this Thesis and it has been impossible, in the time available, to make more than a preliminary survey of many of the materials which are extant. In some instances a 'sampling' approach was adopted, taking records for alternative years or months in order to obtain an understanding of a particular organisation and its operations. More attention has been paid to the records of the ASW and its predecessors than those of the other unions because of the size and significance of that body. No use has been made of the surviving correspondence files of the ASW since at the time when this work was undertaken this voluminous collection was not indexed. Records of other trade unions were used less frequently, although access was gained to the archives of the T&GWU including material from the NAOP. Some 1960's minute books from the NUFTO were loaned by Huw Reid who is working on a history of that union.

The wealth of 'official' materials from the building trade unions is balanced by the survival of 'unofficial' sources, especially in relation to the publication The New Builders Leader which was published from 1935 for nearly twenty years.

Records of the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, housed in the Library of the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology provide an ample supplement to the records of the individual unions. Printed reports of the National Wages and Conditions Council and the National Joint Council for the Building industry are also held there. Unfortunately this collection too was not indexed, but it promised to be a rich source if this work is undertaken. Mr. Ken Price, formerly a Regional Secretary of the NFBTO, now an officer of the National Federation of Building Trades Employers holds surviving papers from Richard Coppock, but these were not available for use during this research.

The NFBTE issues its own published reports, and these too have been deposited in the Modern Records Centre at Warwick University, although unpublished records are still held at The Federation's headquarters at New Cavendish Street, London. Many of the larger construction firms have issued their own 'official history', providing some background on their growth and development. Company records are generally less accessible than those of the trade union movement and it was deemed expedient at the outset to concentrate on the trade union records which were available, rather than to chase the company and employer records which were not.

Documentary sources were supplemented by interviews with past and present members of the Executive Council of UCATT, its constituent unions and other related organisations. These proved invaluable in stimulating and encouraging the work which was in progress, as well as being in themselves a resource for the

research. I must once again record my thanks to all of the people who agreed to co-operate with my work in this way, both for their patience in the face of my questions and for their kindness in assisting me.

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Rulebook

Manchester Alliance of Operative House Painters

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Rulebook

National Amalgamated Society Operative House and Ship Painters  
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Decorators)

EC Minutes, 1904-70.

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National Federation of Building Trades Operatives

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Volumes of minutes and related documents re schemes of  
amalgamation and confederation, 1920's-30's.

Minutes of 1924 Building Trades Dispute Court of Inquiry.

National Federation of Building Trades Employers

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Collected histories of member firms.

INTERVIEWS. (No attempt has been made in the list which follows to provide an exhaustive list of the trade union positions held by each individual)

WILL AUSTIN - ASP&D EC.  
FRANK BERRY - ASP&D EC.  
ALLAN BLACK- UCATT NATIONAL ORGANISER.  
DANIEL CRAWFORD - SPS EC, later ASP&D & UCATT EC.  
HUGH D'ARCY - AUBTW EC, later UCATT EC.  
GEORGE HENDERSON - SCOTTISH PLASTERERS UNION, later NAOP & T&GWU.  
FRANK JACKSON - ASC&J/ASW ACTIVIST. ALSO MEMBER BWIU.  
COMMUNIST PARTY INDUSTRIAL ORGANISER.  
JULIE JACOBS - COMMUNIST PARTY INDUSTRIAL ORGANISER.  
JOHN LEONARD - AUBTW PRESIDENT.  
WILLIAM LEWIS - AUBTW AGS, later UCATT NATIONAL ORGANISER.  
GLYNN LLOYD - ASP&D EC, later UCATT EC.  
CHARLES LOVELL - PLUMBING TRADES UNION, EC, later EETPU.  
GEORGE LOWTHIAN - AUBTW GS.  
WILL MARTIN - ASW EC.  
RICHARD MILES - AUBTW EC.  
JIM MILLS - ASW & NFBTO PRESIDENT.  
LAWRENCE POUPARD - AMALGAMATED SLATERS, TILERS & ROOFING OPERATIVES, GS, later AUBTW & UCATT.  
SAM READING - NATIONAL UNION OF PACKING CASE MAKERS, GS, later ASW & UCATT.  
WILLIAM SMART - AUBTW EC, later UCATT GC.  
ARTHUR UTTING - UCATT EC.  
ALBERT WILLIAMS - AUBTW EC, later UCATT EC.  
NORMAN WILLIS - T&GWU, later TUC.  
LESLIE WOOD - ASW AGS, UCATT GS.  
JACK YOUNGS - ASW, EC.  
HARRY WEAVER - NFBTO, <sup>GS</sup>  
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15. S. Harrison, 1974.
16. B. & S. Webb, 1894, Ch.1.
17. G.D.H. Cole, 1953. Suggests that after the defeats in Lancashire employers outlawed the OBU, although not the individual trade societies - a move which strengthened the case of the 'exclusives' who favoured separate & autonomous craft organisation.

18. Since the GUC&J affiliated to the OBU as a trade society in 1833 and the OSM disaffiliated from it in 1834, both unions retained thereafter their distinct and continuous organisation.
19. R. Postgate, 1923. p.95.
20. Cited in Postgate, 1923. p.99.
21. B. & S. Webb, Industrial Democracy, 1897. (Longmans Green & Co. 1911 ed. p.109).
22. K. Marx, Capital Vol.1. Penguin, 1976 ed. p.1008.
23. B. & S. Webb, 1897. Ch.3. The unit of government.
24. L. Wood, The Story Of UCATT: a union to build. Lawrence & Wishart, 1979.

## Chapter 1. Footnotes

1. R. Postgate, 1923, p.397 rectifying Cole. No indication is given as to how this figure was reached and on the basis of the number of unions which existed at national level it seems likely that the figure for local societies was underestimated. In any event the number was falling as local societies were assimilated into national bodies during the period 1900-1914.
2. The debate on the origins of the early craft societies was taken up by G.Howell and by the Webbs. The latter were concerned to disassociate trade unions from the craft guilds of earlier periods which had embraced both masters and journeymen within the same organisation. Most recently R. Leeson Travelling Brothers 1979 has taken up the arguments in favour of the continuity of the early craft societies with the guilds.
3. The major exception was in textile production where organisation developed in the context of the factory based expansion of output which was a feature of Britain's industrial revolution. Whether in engineering, printing, shoe-manufacture or the various building trades handcraft work predominated at least until the middle of the 19th Century.
4. H. Clegg, A. Fox & A.F. Thompson, A History of British Trade Unions since 1889. 1964. Ch.1 Postgate, 1923. Webbs, 1897 (1911 ed Pt.2 Ch.1) Described this as the method of mutual insurance.
5. Ibid
6. The elite within the building trades was not homogeneous. It could, within the crafts, be viewed as a hierarchy, in which the stonemasons represented the upper levels and the painters the lower end of a gradation of skill. The

unifying feature was that all the trades identified themselves as skilled or craft workers.

7. The 'new unionism' was symbolised by the strike of women workers at Bryant & Mays metal factory in East London in 1888, followed a year later by the great dock strike. The novelty of trade union organisation amongst the unskilled & semi-skilled impressed contemporaries and historians alike, (eg Tillet archive, MRC Press-cuttings, Webbs 1894, 1930 ed. Ch.7, E. Hobsbawm Labouring Men). Its significance has more recently been questioned by Clegg, Fox & Thompson, 1964. Ch.2 who stress that the distinction was based on a caricature of the 'old' societies and that it was decreasingly relevant as the 'new' unions struggled for survival during the 1890's. But the form, scope and objects of recruitment by the 'new' unions differed fundamentally from their predecessors, and the experience in building is of enormous difference in the types of society which recruited skilled and unskilled operatives. There is no scope however in building for the contrast made by Hobsbawm between the localised building units of the craft organisation, compared with the closed shop of the new unions' aspirations.
8. R. Postgate, 1923.
9. ASCC&J MJ Oct 1920. R. Hyman, Workers Union, 1971.
10. Webbs, 1897.
11. Webbs, History 1894 & Postgate 1923.
12. H. Richardson & D. Aldcroft. Building in the British economy between the wars 1968.
13. J. Parry-Lewis Building cycles and Britain's growth, 1965.
14. Postgate, 1923. Richardson & Aldcroft, 1968.
15. G. Stedman Jones, Outcast London, 1971.

16. G. Stedman Jones, Outcast London, 1971.
17. Richardson & Aldcroft, 1968. Farry-Lewis, 1965.
18. Probably written during the early years of the century, not published until after his death. Tressall's background was obscure. He worked for several years as a housepainter in the South of England, his experience forming the basis for his novel.  
F. Ball - One of the damned: The life and times of Robert Tressall, Weiderfeld & Nicolson, 1973.
19. R. Tressall Ragged Trousered Philanthropist, 1st full ed. Granada Publishing Ltd. 1965. Batsford 1976..
20. Richardson & Aldcroft, 1968.
21. D. Olsen - The growth of Victorian London, Batsford, 1976.
22. Kingsford - Building and building workers. Arnold, 1973.
23. D. Olsen, 1976.
24. Building News, (1896) 290. Cited in Olsen 1976, p.228.
25. Richardson & Aldcroft, 1968.
26. " " "
27. Kingsford, 1973.
28. B. Holton, British syndicalism, 1900-1914. 1976. Identifies the effects of 'skill displacing technological change as being most acute for bricklayers and for masons.
29. GUC&J AR 1906. GS's remarks.
30. J. Hinton, The first shop stewards movement, 1973 Pp.60-63.
31. B. Holton, 1976, p.154.
32. There were less far-reaching changes in housebuilding - eg The use of compo (cement and sand) as external walls, and the manufacture of fibrous plaster slabs, both of which lowered the demand for plasters.
33. Board of Trade Census of Production, Final Report. (Cd.6320), 1913.

34. Board of Trade Census of Production, Final Report.

	<u>UK Output Construction</u>	<u>Alt. &amp; Repair</u>	<u>Constr. Alt. &amp; Repair Not separately distinguished</u>
Building	39,378,000	25,714,000	8,356,000
Construct: Other than building	11,210,000	1,101,000	1,325,000
	<u>Total</u>		
Building	73,448,000	Const. other than building as % of total = 15.6%.	
Const. other than building	<u>13,636,000</u>		
	87,084,000		

35. R. Coad - Laing: The biography of John W. Laing, (1879-2978), 1979.

36. PP.1910 LXXXIV Cd.5086.1.

37. Ibid

38. Clegg, Fox and Thompson 1964.

39. OBS Rulebk 1908.

40. GUC&J Rulebk 1915.

41. ASHD&P Rulebk 1904.

42. ASC&J Rulebk 1914.

43. NFBTE: an outline history, 1878-1978. Bound in vol. of NFBTE Repts. 1977-78.

44. GUC&J MR's Apr & Jun 1889.

45. London United Trades Cttee of Carpenters & Joiners, ltrr to the Central Assoc. of Master Builders of London, 14 Nov 1890. GUC&J MR Nov 1890.

46. GUC&J MR Jun 1891.

47. Ibid

48. Ibid United Trade Cttee of Carpenters & Joiners. Circular on the Eight-Hour Movement, 1890-91.

49. GUC&J MR Oct 1891.
50. GUC&J MR Nov 1891.
51. GUC&J MR Nov 1891 & Feb 1893. Includes the 2nd Quarterly Rept. of the LBTF. R. Postgate, 1923
52. LBTF Rulebook 1894.
53. Membership
- |                        | <u>1892</u> | <u>1900</u> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| ASC&J                  | 37,588      | 60,264      |
| GUC&J                  | 3,645       | 7,727       |
| OBS                    | 22,270      | 38,830      |
| Painters (Nat. Amalg.) | 4,194       | 10,448      |
| NAOP                   | 6,925       | 11,009      |
| Plumbers               | 6,177       | 11,186      |
54. OBS AR 1890.
55. ASHD&P (London) AR's 1890 & 1893
56. GUC&J MR Jun 1892.
57. GUC&J MR Mar 1895 & AR 1894.
58. GUC&J AR 1896.
59. Clegg, Fox and Thompson. 1964. p.156 R.C on L. PP 1893 IX (C 6894). Q32,315 & GUC&J AR 1896.
60. GUC&J AR 1896.
61. Clegg, Fox and Thompson 1964. Reports that of 170 towns circularised 85 replies were received & about 70 showed that there were restrictions in operation in one or more of the crafts.
62. J. Saville. in Trade unions and free labour: the background to the Taff Vale Decision. Essays in labour history Vol.1.
63. Clegg, Fox & Thompson, 1964. p.308.
64. Ibid
65. NFBTE Outline History.
66. MUOB Quarterly Rept Jun 1899. Quote from Postgate, 1923, p.367.

67. MUOB Quarterly Rept Jun 1899.  
p.367.
68. Postgate 1923. Clegg, Fox & Thompson, 1964 are agreed as to the force of Deller's personality, although the value placed on his qualities as a leader differ according to the perspective of the writers. Whilst for Postgate Deller is 'The man of action who is lacking in the other craft societies', Clegg et al points to the 'forceful ... domineering ... overbearing and intolerant' qualities in his character.
69. NFBTE Outline History.
70. Clegg, Fox and Thompson 1964. p.351. Report on changes in rates of wages and hours of labour in the UK, 1906.  
CD 3713. PP 1907 LXXX. 789. Statistics are only given for carpenters and plumbers.  
Report of changes in rates of wages and hours of labour in 1908. CD 4713 PP 1909 LXXX . 629. Employment in building continued to be low during 1908, with a mean percentage of trade unionists unemployed of 11.5% for that year. The means for the 10 years 1899-1908 was 5.9%. It might be expected that unemployment would be worse amongst trades where alternative employment prospects were more limited - esp. amongst the painters.
- 71.
- |            | <u>1901</u> | <u>1910</u> |                                                                                                                                              |
|------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| OBS        | 38,743      | 23,284      | (NB The decline in membership of the Painters is underestimated since the Nat.Soc. took over several local societies between 1901-and 1910). |
| Painters   | 16,213      | 14,909      |                                                                                                                                              |
| Plasterers | 10,074      | 6,522       |                                                                                                                                              |
- (two national Socs.) merged society
72. Clegg, Fox and Thompson 1964. p.355.
73. PP 1909 LXXX. 629 (Cd 4713).

74. Report of changes in rates of wages and hours of labour in 1910. CD 5849. PP 1911 LXXXIX 407.
75. Report of an enquiry by the B of T into the earnings and hours of labour of workpeople of the UK in 1906. CD 5086, PP.1910. LXXXIV.1.
76. Cd.4713 & Cd.5849 op cit.
77. Clegg, Fox & Thompson 1964. p.352.
78. NFBTE Outline history.
79. Ibid
80. Postgate 1923, p.381.
81. Webbs, 1897.
82. eg GUC&J Rulebk. 1915 Rule 19 Establishment of a private fund was allowed if 2/3 of members voted in favour. Contributions not to exceed 1d per week.  
MUOB Quarterly Rept Sep 1879 indicates that MUOB branches had their own funds over which the EC has no control.
83. GUC&J Rulebk 1915; ASC&J Rulebk 1914; NASOH&SP&D Rulebk 1914.
84. OBS Rulebk, 1908.
85. ASC&J Rulebk 1914.
86. Ibid
87. OBS Rulebk 1908 Rule 33.
88. Ibid Rule 10 Cl.34.
89. OSM Rulebk 1907.
90. NASOH&SP&D Rulebk 1914.
91. ASC&J Rulebk 1914 & ASE Rulebk 1907.
92. GUC&J Rulebk 1915.
93. ASC&J Rulebk 1914.
94. eg During the 1890's described as 'The Building Trades isolated' because of the attitude of the union leaders. But the attitude of the leaders did not always reflect

activities of the membership, where union organisation was expanding and new moves being made to establish co-operation between trades.

95. Ch. Crossan & G. Hicks OBS Trade Repts. 1913.
96. GUC&J MR Nov 1900.
97. eg This account of functions of branch officers is based on OBS Rulebk 1908 but is typical of arrangements in building craft unions for the period.
98. ASC&J Rulebk 1914.
99. Ibid OBS Rulebk 1908, NASOH&SP&D Rulebk 1914.
100. OSM Rulebk 1907.
101. GUC&J MR Nov 1900.
102. Webbs, 1894.
103. Manchester Salford and District Building Industries Federation, 13th AR 1905.
104. Postgate, 1923, p.382.
105. The craft societies expanded their membership and in at least one instance broadened the basis of recruitment at the same time as the 'new unions' were developing. The GUC&J opened up membership at the end of the nineteenth century to 'trade-only' applicants, with the object of recruiting those workers who were already covered for friendly benefits by membership of a friendly society.
106. OBS AR 1897 GS's remarks.
107. Postgate 1923 p.360. The scheme never received wide support, only 44 unions with a total membership of 343,000 affiliating at its inception.
108. Nat. Amalg. Soc. Op. Ho. & Ship Painters & Decorators ('Manchester) AR 1901.
109. Ibid "
110. OBS AR 1892.

111. OBS Trade Circular (Monthly) Jan 1901.
112. OBS AMGC Mins Aug 1901. A Resolution instructing moves on amalg. to be made at the first favourable opportunity was lost. A resolution stating that there should be no further action for the time being was lost. And a resolution stating that although prepared to meet other bricklayers' societies on the subject of amalgamation, there was no way of pressing any further at present was also lost. There was no way around the problem.
113. OBS EC Mins Dec 3 1901. In Obs T.C. Dec 1901.
114. MUOB Monthly Rept Nov 1909.
115. OBS T.C. Jun 1910.
116. OBS T.C. Nov 1910.
117. OBS T.C. Sep 1910.
118. Webbs, 1897.
119. R. Postgate, 1923. p.357.
120. eg Where members of the GUC&J refused to strike at the Woolwich Co-op Soc's building work on the Abbey Wood Estate against Imported Joinery which, it was alleged, was made by non-union labour. The ASC&J had a special interest in this case because of its membership in the USA. GUC&J GC Mins Jul 1900.
121. Postgate, 1923 p.357. On the trade section Postgate says: 'So it was that the General Union returned from the dead. Like some of the lower forms of organic life, it was of low vitality, but persistent.'
122. GUC&J MR Apr-Oct 1902. Corres. (printed) between the ASC&J & the GUC&J.
123. GUC&J Rept. of Leicester Conference June 14 1902.
124. R. Postgate, 1923 suggests that a disagreement occurred at the Leicester Conference in June. 'Matkin had

assumed that the two lesser unions would make common cause against their enormous rival to enforce the establishment of a trade section and a change of name. He was infuriated to find that the Amalgamation had come to a private agreement with the Associated.' In fact the Leicester conference seems to have ended amicably with an agreement in principle between the ASC&J and the GUC&J on the need for amalgamation. The representatives of the smaller society indicated that they intended to refer the question to their General Council, whilst leaders of the Amalgamated indicated that they would, in the interim, pursue negotiations with the AC&JS. The results of these negotiations were announced only at the end of August, some time after the Leicester conference.

125. R. Postgate 1923 suggests that the ASC&J made no significant concessions in 1904. However the provision of a trade section was the major demand of the GUC&J, and it was not to be conceded again before the war.
126. GUC&J Rept. of corres. & conferences between the GUC&J & the Amalg. Societies. In vol. of Monthly Repts 1904 & GUC&J MR Jan 1905.
127. Grunfeld Modern Trade Union Law - 1966. This requirement was laid down by the Trade Union Amendment Act, 1876.
128. ASC&J GC Mins Jul 6 1907.
129. Amalgamation of Kindred Trades: minutes of adjourned conference held in Manchester, 23 Feb 1907 in GUC&J MR Mar 1907.
130. Association of Woodworking Trade Unions: mins of meeting 14 Aug 1907. GUC&J MR Sep 1907.
131. GUC&J MR Dec 1907.
132. The ASC&J already had (account given in ASC&J GC Mins 1913) some members in Scotland whilst the AC&JS had some

members in England, but on the whole their scope for their recruitment was marked by the border between England and Scotland.

133. Webbs, 1897.
134. London Amalgamated AR 1893 NASOH&SP&D Half-Year Rept. Jun 1901.
135. NASOH&SP&D Quarterly Rept Sep 1904.
136. NASOH&SP&D : Mins of delegate meeting Jan 25-Feb 3 1904.
137. NASOH&SP&D Quarterly Rept Mar 1901.
138. NASOH&SP&D " Sep 1904.
139. NASOH&SP&D AR 1904. Full control was claimed in Manchester and Birmingham, but not in Liverpool, Birkenhead or Southport. Practically all of the London societies had been assimilated by this stage.
140. The merger of the 2 societies seems to have been a popular cause. At a joint 'smoker' of the 2 unions held in London in September 1902 references to amalgamation met with 'ringing cheers'.
141. NASOH&SP&D QR Sep 1904 & NASOH&SP&D EC Mins Aug 27 1904.
142. Grunfeld p.236.
143. Postgate, 1923. p.383.
144. NASOH&SP&D.  
EC Mins Oct 1 1904.  
Results of voting of London Amalgamated reported as 3,080 in favour and 583 against "92 over the requisite 2/3 majority required."  
EC Min Oct 8 1904.  
Results of voting of NASOH&SP&D reported as 4,100 in favour and 436 against, or "1,076 over a 2/3 majority as provided by rule."

145. London Amalgamated EC ins Oct 31 1904. Records of the Reg. of Friendly Socs. have been passed both to the PRO & to the Certification Office for Trade Unions and Employers Association. In neither place were these records extant which could have shed light on this puzzle.
146. NASOH&SP&D QR Mar 1902. Discussions initiated and membership figures & finances of the societies reported.
147. NASOH&SP&D EC Mins Nov 26 1904.
148. B. Holton, 1976.
149. R. Hyman, 1971. p.35, Footnote 1.
150. H. Pelling - A History of British Trade Unionism, 1963.

	<u>No. of stoppages</u>	<u>Aggregate duration in striker days</u>
1910	521	9,870,000
1911	872	10,160,000
1912	834	40,890,000
1913	1,459	9,800,000
1914	972	9,880,000

151. B. Holton, 1976.
152. Leaflet One Union for the Building Industry, 1912.
153. This view does not essentially conflict with that of Holton, since he does not argue that direct support for syndicalism was other than very limited. See p.76.
154. B of Trade Labour Dept. Abstract of Labour Statistics.

	<u>No. of strikes in building</u>	<u>Workers involved</u>	<u>Aggregate duration</u>
1910	17	880	35,475
1911	27	2,789	74,962
1912	58	5,634	106,638
1913	198	40,002	823,829
1914	177	38,000	3,184,000

It is apparent that, as Peter Latham suggests (PhD Thesis) the major growth in the incidence & duration of strikes

- in building was between 1912 and 1914.
155. OBS TC Apr 1913.
  156. Phelps Brown - The growth of British industrial relations.  
Macmillan, 1959.
  157. OBS TC Mar 1913.
  158. Ibid
  159. OBS AR 1897.
  160. OBS TC Dec 1911 Ltrr from G. Hicks - The other, Charles Crossan favoured only kindred amalgamation.
  161. OBS TC Mar 1910.
  162. OBS TC May 1911 & J. Wills Article in Chicago SP IS Review  
13 (3) Sept 1912.
  163. Holton 1976, pp. 154-5.
  164. OBS EC Mins Feb 7 1912 - in OBS TC Mar 1912,
  165. Holton 1976 p.157.
  166. OBS Consolidation Cttee Leaflet No 1 issued Dec 1911.
  167. Provision.Cttee for the Consolidation of the Building  
Industries Trades' Unions into One Industrial Organisation.  
Lraflet No.2 issued Nov 30 1911.
  168. J. Wills In IS Review op cit.
  169. Mins of Conferences held by the Par. Cttee of the TUC to  
consider amalgamation of the Building Trades Unions, 18  
Apr 1912. OBS TC May 1912.
  170. Amalgamation Committee's proposals. As presented to  
and approved by the conference held at Essex Hall on June  
21 1912.
  171. OBS TC Nov 1912. In the assessment of 'members voting for'  
and in the discussions on membership participation in the  
ballot the figure for 'the number of papers supplied' has  
been taken as the basis of membership, although there is a  
wide discrepancy between this and other membership figures

reported during the same year in some cases.

The number of members voting in the ASC&J was high when compared with voting on other issues, say on the election of the General Secretary. When Chandler stood for re-election as GS in 1905 only 14,839 members voted, approximately 25% of the membership in that year and roughly half the percentage voting on the amalgamation question. Within the OBS the question of amalgamation seems to have aroused no more and no less enthusiasm than other issues. When John Batchelor stood for re-election in 1910 he was supported by nearly 4,000 members and the overall percentage of members voting was not dissimilar to that voting on the amalgamation question.

172. Holton, 1976.

173. OBS EC Mins Dec 4 1912. OBS TC Jan 1913.

174. The Painters, Plumbers, Plasterers, GUC&J, ETU & The Slaters & Tilers voted against the scheme in its entirety. The OBS members voted in favour of one part but not another, whilst the United Order General Labourers of London, the National Associated Builders' Labourers, The UBLU, The MUOB & The Cave House Painters voted to support both parts. The ASC&J, on the decision of the GC did not, participate in the ballot.

175. GUC&J MR Nov 1913. Mins of proceedings, 14 - 15 Oct 1913.

176. GUC&J AR 1913.

177. OBS National Consolidation Committee Circular Nov 1913.

178. ASC&J MR Feb & Oct 1914.

179. ASC&J MJ Jan 1914 Member's letter, G.W. Clegg, Rochdale Branch.

180. OBS EC Mins Mar 27 1914.

181. OBS EC Mins Feb 11 1914.

182. R. Postgate, 1923. Pp. 17-8. OBS EC Mins May 29 1914.

183. OSM Jnl 88 May 13 1914 Voting in April was:

	<u>In favour of settlement</u>	<u>Against</u>
OSM	460	449
In May	775	204

184. NAOP MR Jun 1914.

185. NAOP MR June 1914.

186. The militant EC of the OSM had by this time been ousted from office by their own General Council who were concerned to end the dispute. R. Postgate, 1923. p.419. OBS EC Mins June 22 1914.

187. ASC&J MJ Sep 1914.

188. Ibid

189. OBS EC Mins Aug 7 & Aug 11 1914.

190. NFBTO MS Mins of joint trades, 1914-18. Meetings were held regularly after the lock out was ended. Other commentators point to the establishment of the NABTC in 1915 without indicating the continuity of meetings.

191. Postgate, 1923. p.400-401.

192. Holton, 1976.

193. Postgate, 1923. p.395.

Chapter 2. Footnotes

1. Pelling, 1963.
2. Solden, 1978.
3. Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest. Par. Papers 1917-18 XV. Cd. 8662-8667. Cd. 8696.
4. Postgate, 1923 Account. C. Goodrich, 1920. Matthews,
5. Report on changes in rates of wages and hours of labour in The UK in 1912. PP 1914 LXXX. 679 (Cd.7080)
6. NFBTO Min bk 1914-18. Mins of meeting Oct 15 1915.
7. OSM Jnl Jul 15 1915 NABTC Mins of annual meeting 17 Jun 1915.
8. OSM Jnl No.132 Jan 19 1916.
9. OSM Annual Audit GS's remarks, 1915.
10. ASC&J MJ Jul 1916

Occupation	No. insured May 1916	% Unemployed	
		May 1916	May 1915
Carpenters	112,824	1.1%	2.4%
Bricklayers	50,228	1.0%	1.9%
Masons	28,525	1.8%	2.8%
Plasterers	14,430	3.0%	2.7%
Painters	90,051	0.6%	-
Plumbers	29,740	0.7%	1.7%
Other skilled Occ.	33,079	0.7%	1.7%
Navvies	100,048	0.4%	0.8%
Labourers	205,578	0.7%	1.1%

11. HMM. 7(1). 64.
12. OSM MJ 111 Mar 31 1915. Encourages younger men to join the army so that the numbers unemployed should be reduced.  
  
OBS MR May 1917. Indicates that many young members under 31 have departed to join the colours.  
  
ASC&J MJ Oct 1916 indicates that in Aug 1914 there were

840,000 men in building industry employed mainly on private building work. By Oct 1916 this figure was reduced to 540,000 of whom only 140,000 were estimated to be employed on private building.

13. HMM 7 (1).
14. ASW MJ Apr 1924. Historical Jottings.  
J. Hinton PhD Thesis, 1969. The three firms were Beardmore (Glasgow), The Govt. factory at Farnborough and one other private firm.
15. HMM 8(1) & 8(2).
16. HMM 5(5).
17. HMM 4(1).
18. HMM 4(1).
19. ASW MJ Apr 1924.
20. Female dilutees were used on aeroplanes and seaplanes, on box making and gun cases. GUC&J AR 1915.
21. ASC&J MJ Jul 1916.
22. Statutory Rules and Orders 1916 no.621.
23. ASC&J Norwich 1st Branch Min bk 1917 Sep 1. Report of a member from London.
24. ASC&J Norwich 1st Branch Min bk 1917 Nov 24. A sort of domino theory seems to have prevailed in this case. A demarcation dispute had arisen at Mann & Egertons regarding the women's work, and the men refused to work with them as a consequence. Universal conclusions were drawn by the Norwich branch from their particular problems.
25. Gretna, Salisbury Plain, East Anglia.
26. Hyman, 1971.
27. Rept. of Whitley Cttee.
28. ASC&J MJ Feb 1914. A. Gould repting back on the work of The Northern Centre Board of Conciliation.

- 29. Account of strike: See above Ch.1.
- 30. ASCC&J AR 1920.
- 31. C H Phelps Brown - Growth of British industrial relations, 1959,
- 32. NFBTO. Mins of meeting 1915 Oct 5.
- 33. ASCC&J AR 1920.
- 34. ASC&J MJ Jul 1918.  
ASC&J MJ Jun 1916.
- 35. P. Latham PhD: This account is based on F. Jackson's Story of the building workers, a document which is not readily available. Published in the 30's, it may not be reliable as to detail. An interview with F. Jackson in 1978 failed to produce any substantial evidence as to the extent of organisation for the BWIU during the London lock-out.
- 36. NFBTO MS Min bk of Joint Trades, 1914-18. Mins of meeting Sep 16 1914.
- 37. " " " " " "
- 38. The BWIU reached its peak around 1919 but its membership was never substantial.

1914	-	500
1915	-	1,000
1916	-	1,000
1917	-	1,000
1918	-	1,671
1919	-	2,351
1920	-	1,469
1921	-	745
1922	-	642
1923	-	551
1924	-	383
Ceased to exist thereafter.		

- 39. NFBTO MS Min bk of Joint Trades 1914-18: mins 1914-16.
- 40. " " " " mins of meeting Oct 17-18 1916.
- 41. Proposals to establish a Federation again emanated from the ASC&J NFBTO Min bk 1914-18 Mins of meeting Oct 17-18 1916.
- 42. NFBTO. Min bk 1914-18. Mins of meeting Nov 15 1917. Voting on the Federation scheme.

	For	Against
ASC&J	10,515	3,001
GUC&J	1,384	595
Nat Painters Soc.	5,209	1,470
Operative Plumbers	1,278	439
MUOB	929	130
OSM	273	12
Nat Builders Lab.	<u>1,767</u>	<u>109</u>
	21,355	5,756

Slaters & Tilers & UBLU also voted in favour but no figures are recorded.

- 43. The TU Amalgamation Amendment Act was passed in 1917.
- 44. NFBTO Constitution 1918.
- 45. " " "
- 46. " " "
- 47. NFBTO Min bk 1914-18. Mins of meeting May 8 1918.
- 48. ASC&J MJ Jul 1916.
- 49. "
- 50. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Emerg. Cttee 1918 May 29.
- 51. G. Askwith IP & D
- 52. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Emerg. Cttee 1918 May 29.
- 53. "
- 54. NFBTO Mins of Emerg. Cttee 1919 Jun 30.
- 55. NFBTO Mins of Emerg. Cttee 1920 Mar 23.

56. NFBTO EC Mins 1919 Feb 20-21.
57. NFBTO Emerg. Cttee Mins 1918 May 29, & 1919 Jan 7.
58. NFBTO Annual meeting 1918 Aug 21.
59. AUBTW No.2 Div. Co. Min bk. 1919 Oct 11.
60. Hilton, 1968 Pp 56-7.
61. NFBTO ACP 1923; Comp. Section.
62. NFBTO Emerg. Cttee Annual Meeting 1919.
63. NFBTO Mins. of meeting 1916 Aug 24.
64. NFBTO " " " 1918 Aug 21. Applications for affiliation were refused to the Amal. Gas Municipal and General Workers; the United Order of General Labourers, London; Navvies, Builders Labourers and General Labourers' Union; The Nat. Union of General Workers; the Workers Union; The Bricklayers Trade Protection Sick and Burial (Sheffield); The Fret Lead Glaziers and Cutters Union; Ornamental Decorators; Amalg. Glass Workers of the UK; The Nat. Soci. of Concrete and Asphalt Workers; The London Soc. of Asphalt Workers and The Progressive Soc. of French Polishers.
65. NFBTO Mins of EC meeting Nov.25-26 1918.
66. " " " 1919 May 27.
67. The discussions between the labourers' societies regarding amalgamation are considered in more detail in Ch.3.
68. OBS MR May 1917.
69. OSM - see above footnote 9.
70. HMM Vol. 5 (5) p.68.
71. ASC&J MJ Aug 1915.
72. eg ASC&J comments on extension of union staffing at head office for this region.  
OBS MR Sep 1915 indicates that the OBS nationally is paying the rail expenses of its members being moved around the country on govt work - an indication of the concern to control labour supply.

73. ASC&J MJ Mar 1915 EC.
74. ASC&J MJ Mar 1915 Report by A.C. Fuller, formerly Camp Delegate, Salisbury Plain.
75. ASC&J MJ Aug 1915.
76. HMM Vol. 5 Pt.5 p.68.
77. OBS MR Nov 1915 EC Mins of Oct 29.
78. Clay 1929.
79. Askwith 1920. p.446.
80. OBS MR Jul 1917. EC Mins Jun 20 1917. Reported that organisers were appointing card stewards on site.
81. ASC&J MJ Nov.1917.
82. ASW MJ Apr 1924.
83. " "
84. ASC&J MJ Sep 1916.
85. 1-0 $\frac{1}{2}$ d was the established district rate for joiners & cabinet makers ASC&J MJ Oct 1916.
86. ASC&J MJ Nov 1916 - Leaving certificates were required by section 7 of the Munitions Act before an operative was entitled to change jobs. The Certificate stated that the person was leaving with the consent of the employer. This requirement effectively eliminated the free movement of labour for the duration of the war.
87. July 1916.
88. HMM Vol.5 Pt.1P.143-146.
89. HMM " "
90. HMM " "
91. ASW MJ Apr 1924.
92. ASC&J MJ Oct & Nov 1917.
93. HMM Vol.5 Pt.1 p.148-9.
94. ASC&J MJ Mar.1918.
95. Hinton, 1973.

96. Askwith 1920.
97. ASC&J MJ Feb 1918.
98. ASC&J MJ Mar 1918.
99. ASC&J MJ Feb.1918. Unlike engineering workers most building workers were not eligible for the trade cards which exempted them from military service.
100. HMM Vol 6- Pt.1 p.74.
101. Higenbotham, 1939.
102. HMM Vol.6 Pt.1 p.74. J. Hinten Thesis, p.390-5.
103. " "
104. There has been an attempt to extend the argument concerning the growth of shop steward organisation and revolutionary ideas from engineering to building workers in aircraft production. J. Hinton Thesis, 1969 discusses the emerging stewards movement in aircraft production, but focuses closely on the Waring & Gillow strike. P. Latham, Thesis 1978 makes similar assertions in respect of the aircraft woodworkers shop steward organisation in London.

It is important to stress the extent to which unrest in engineering may have influenced the aircraft woodworkers, and indeed during 1918 it seemed that a similar turbulence could develop in aircraft manufacture. London in particular was a centre of unrest. Yet it must be allowed that there was a fundamental difference in the experiences of engineering & woodworking.

105. J. Hinton, 1973.
106. NFBTO Min bk of Joint Trades, 1914-18. Mins of quarterly meeting Feb.20 1917.
107. ASC&J MJ Apr 1918.
108. ASC&J MJ Feb 1917.

109. A ballot was conducted on the question in 1918 resulting in a 5:1 majority against. ASC&J MJ Feb 1917.
110. ASC&J MJ July 1916. An award made in 1916 to the Midland Railway Co. was extended through an award of the Con P to the three Scottish Railway Companies, the North Staffordshire and The Great Western Railway and subsequently to other areas.
111. Commission of Inquiry into Industrial Unrest. PP.1917-18 XV. Pp.133-147. (Div.8) Scotland Cd 8669.
112. J. Hinton 1973. P.127. A. Clinton Trades councils during World War I. Int. Review of Social History 1970 (2).
113. S. Merrett, 1979. In England and Wales between 1911 and 1918 the increase in the number of householdings needing separate dwellings was 848,000 units but only 238,000 units were added to the existing stock, a deficit of 610,000 homes.
114. S. Merrett, 1979 Ch.2.
115. " " GDH Cole - British trade unionism today.
116. NFBTO Mins of meeting Jan 7 1919.
117. NFBTE Statement of case before the National Conciliation Board. GUC&J MR Aug 1919.
118. " "
119. S. Higenbotham 1939, p.218.
120. The Rept of an Inquiry by the Board of Trade into the Earnings and Hours of Labour of Workpeople of the UK (Cd 5086) PP.1910. LXXXIV indicates that weekly hours of labour varied from an average of about 51 hours in London, the N. of England and Scotland, to averages of 55-56 hours in the Midlands and other parts of England and Wales at this time.
121. ASC&J MJ Nov 1920.
122. H. Hewmann 'Pages from our history OB 1947-8.
123. ASW MJ Apr 1921.

124. The consolidation of national negotiating machinery diminished the already limited relevance of the Ind. Council for the Building Industry, a body which was viewed with a certain amount of scepticism by the employers. By 1922 many constituent bodies of this organisation had tendered their resignation. Nat. Soc. Painters MJ Mar 1922.
125. ASW MJ Apr 1921 Higenbotham 1939, p.221.
126. " "
127. W. Hilton, 1968. Pp.136-8.
128. NFBTO EC Min bk 1918-20. Mins of meeting Feb 24 1920.
129. NFBTO Mins of annual meeting, 1919.
130. NFBTO Mins of EC Meeting Jan 15 1920.

### Chapter 3. Footnotes

1. Webbs, 1894 (1950 ed.) Pp.487-488: The unions which merged with the ASE were The Steam Engine Makers' Society, The United Machine Workers' Association, the UK Society of Amalgamated Smiths and Strikers, The Associated Brass founders and Copper Smiths' Society, The North of England Brass Turners' Society and the London United Metal Turners, Fitters and Finishers.
2. Bullock, 1960. Ch.8.
3. Clegg, 1954. Pt.1.
4. eg Bob Holton, 1976.
5. eg OBS TC Nov 1910 Lettr from Parkhead br. calling for 'consolidation of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers, with a view to the more efficient organisation of the Building Trade.  
ASC&J MJ May 1916 Lttr J.C.H. Robinson, organiser, Oldham & Ashton districts calls for One Union for the Woodworking Trades in opposition to sectional unionism.
6. eg ASC&J MJ Jan 1920. Resolution from Camden Town branch.  
'That we, the members of the above branch urge our GC and EC to do all in their power to bring about the amalgamation of the different woodworking societies. We feel that the time has arrived when in our own interest we must present a solid front to the employers. The present overlapping and duplicating of officials only tends to weaken our forces. We should also like to feel assured that the negotiations now in progress between our society and the GU are not hampered by individuals trying to raise obstacles towards amalgamation rather than removing them.'
7. See Ch.1.
8. Bullock, 1960. P.41 & P.153.
9. Clay, 1929.

10. Bullock, 1960. F.157-C.
11. Grunfeld Modern trade union law. 1966.
12. TUC Rept. 1916 and Corres. to the TUC Act (Amendment Act) 1876. PRO LAB 2/218/ML 1059/3.
13. Grunfeld op cit PRO LAB 2/218/ML 1059/3.
14. ASC&J MJ Jan 1917. A.G. Cameron. Lttr to the Fabian Research Dept.
15. Ibid
16. Ibid  
 'If a coachmaker cannot find employment making coaches or perambulators, but can be employed making kennels or poultry houses, he should be permitted to do so. If this is admitted and the right of changing from one class of woodwork to another is granted to all woodworkers, then the question arises as to whether more than one union is required for such craftsmen.'
17. ASC&J MJ Dec 1915. Conf. of EC's representing Wood-working Trades 12 Nov 1915. Attended by the ASC&J, the GUC&J, The ASWN, The AUCM, NAFTA, The 'Organ Builders' Society and The Wheelwrights and Coachmakers' Union. The conference was convened to consider pbr in the aircraft industry, the question of premium bonus and the introduction of women workers. It was agreed to maintain joint approaches on these issues. The question of amalgamation was raised and it was agreed that it form the basis for future discussions.
18. AUCM AR 1934.
19. ASW MJ Apr 1932 'Historical jottings' No.30. Amalgamation with the cabinet makers.
20. ASC&J MJ Dec 1917. Amalgamation: AUCM/ASC&J.
21. ASC&J MJ Dec 1917. " "

22. ASC&J MJ Nov 1917. An amalgamation: AUCF/ASC/J.
23. ASW MJ Apr 1932 'Historical jottings' No.30.
24. ASC&J MJ Mar 1918.
25. Postgate, 1923. P.435.
26. ASC&J MJ Apr 1916. Ltr from Sam Viant, Paddington br., later a Parliamentary representative of the ASW.
27. Ibid
28. ASC&J MJ Apr 1916.
29. GUC&J AR 1915.
30. ASC&J GC Mins Jul 14 1916.
31. GUC&J GC Mins Jul 1916 in Rept. for 1916.
32. GUC&J MR Jan 1918.
33. A resolution from Belfast Lodge of the GUC&J supporting amalgamation describes this predicament. GUC&J MR Jan 1918.
34. GUC&J MR Jan 1918. GC Mins Jan 15 1918.
35. The EC of the GUC&J was elected from members within a 20m radius of the centre of London which was then the seat of government. GUC&J Rulebk 1915. The general office was subject to removal every 4 yrs, although this had not in fact occurred since c.1902.
36. eg ASC&J MJ Apr 1916. SF Viant, Ltr on fusion, indicates support from London branches of the General Union for the amalg. campaign. Voting patterns in the pre-war years indicate a similar attachment within the GUC&J's London membership to amalg.
37. GUC&J MR Jan 1918: GC Mins Jan 15 1918.
38. Ibid
39. GUC&J GC Special meeting: Proceedings & runs Sep 1918.
40. Ibid
41. " MR Nov 1918 EC Mins Summary Oct 17 1918.

42. Holton, 1976.
43. GUC&J MR Apr 1919.
44. GUC&J MR Nov 1918. EC Mins Summary Oct 1917.
45. GUC&J MR Dec 1918. GC & EC Mins of Joint Meetings, Dec 1918.
46. GUC&J MR Jun 1919 Extensive corres. on this matter.
47. Ibid Jul 1919.
48. Ibid Oct 1919.
49. ASCC&J MJ Jun 1920. Address.
50. ASCC&J/GUC&J Ms. Min bk. of amalgamations records meetings held to restructure rules.
51. ASCC&J/GUC&J Mins of amalg. Nominations & elections of EC & GC.
52. Ibid
53. Ibid
54. ASCC&J/GUC&J Proposed terms of amalg. Pp.12. Manchester, 1920.
55. ASCC&J/GUC&J Ms. Mins of amalg. 3rd meeting of sub-cttee.
56. Ibid
57. ASCC&J/GUC&J Proposed terms of amalg. P.3.
58. Ibid Talk of contributions and benefits for each section.
59. Ibid & ASCC&J/GUC&J Mins. of amalg. 5th meeting of sub-cttee.
60. Ibid Meeting of the Sub Cttee of Mar 9 1920.
61. Both Chandler and Matkin are characterised by Postgate as members of the 'old order' - Postgate, 1923. Pp.434-5.
62. GUC&J MR Oct 1919, A view of the negotiating cttee expressed by some London lodges of the GUC&J. The summary mins do not suggest conflict during these discussions.

63. ASCC&J/GUC&J Proposed terms of amalg.
64. ASCC&J/GUC&J Mins of amalg. Full meeting, 30 Mar 1920.
65. ASCC&J/GUC&J Proposed terms of amalg.
66. " " Mins of amalg. Mins. of meeting of GC's & EC's of both societies, Oct 14-15 1920.
67. Ibid
68. ASCC&J MJ June 1920
69. ASCC&J MJ Aug 1920
70. ASCC&J MJ Aug 1920 eg Brighton, Luton, Harrogate.
71. ASCC&J/GUC&J Mins of amalg. Min of meeting of 9 Aug 1920.
72. Ibid
73. ASW 106th AR 1965. Table 1.
74. ASCC&J/GUC&J Proposed terms of amalgamation, 1920.
75. ASW Rulebk 1921.
76. Ibid
77. Ibid
78. ASW Rulebk. 1921.
79. ASCC&J/GUC&J Proposed terms of amalgamation.
80. ASW Rulebk 1921.
81. ASCC&J MJ Sep 1918.
82. ASCC&J MJ May 1918, ASCC&J/NAFTA Amalgamation Circular, May 1918.
83. ASCC&J MJ May 1918: ASCC&J/NAFTA Mins of Conference held at Leicester, Nov 27 1917.
84. Ibid
85. Ibid
86. ASCC&J MJ May 1918: ASCC&J/NAFTA: Amalgamation Circular May 1918.
87. ASCC&J MJ " " "
88. ASCC&J MJ May 1918. Mins of the joint meeting of the GC and the EC 26 Mar 1918, to consider the proposed scheme of amalgamation with the NAFTA

89. ASCC&J MJ May 1918. Mins of the Joint Meeting of the GC and the EC 26 Mar 1918, to consider the proposed scheme of amalgamation with the NAFTA.
90. Ibid " "
91. ASCC&J MJ May 1918 ASCC&J/NAFTA Amalgamation Circular May 1918.
92. ASCC&J MJ May 1918: ASCC&J/NAFTA Amalgamation Circular May 1918.
93. ASCC&J MJ Jul 1918.
94. ASCC&J MJ Dec 1918, 38,727 members voted in favour of amalg. with the NAFTA & 9,014 against.
95. ASCC&J Aug 1918.
96. ASCC&J GC Mins 1919 Jun 14.
97. Julie Jacobs interview. His account of East End furniture trades organisation stressed its left wing circulation.
98. I am grateful to Huw Reid who is working on a history of FTAT for this information.
99. ASCC&J MJ Jul 1920. In reply to a resolution from Portsmouth to the EC indicates that they are happy to open negotiations with the Woodcutting Machinists as soon as leaders of that union are prepared to act.
100. ASCC&J Vol of GC Mins: Memorandum on amalg. with the ASWM 1 Sep 1920, endorsed by the GC Jul 9 1921.
101. Ibid
102. ASCC&J MJ Sep 1920. Complaints from Bristol 4th br.
103. ASCC&J GC Mins Memo on amalg. with the APWM Sep 1920.
104. Ibid
105. Ibid
106. ASW/ASWM Min bk of meetings re amalg. Mins of meeting Nov.14 1921 outline the general principles of amalg. required by the ASWM.
107. Ibid

108. ASW/ASWT Min bk of mee'ings re amalg. Mins of meeting  
Nov 14 1921 outline the general principles of amalg.  
required by the ASWM.
109. Ibid
110. Amalgamation proposals ASWM/ASW, Feb. 1922.
111. Ibid
112. Ibid
113. ASW AR 1922.
114. Huw Reid. Private Conversation.
115. D. Schloss, 1898.
116. Postgate, 1923. Pp.209-211.
117. Webb, 1894. P.487.
118. OBS TC Mar 1916.
119. 1919 Membership OBS - 43,365 - NUOB - 3,780.
120. NUOB 1914 - 1,604                      OBS 1914 - 26,363  
          1918 - 2,136                      1918 - 34,441
121. W.S. Hilton, 1963. P.212.
122.       "                      P.214.
123.       "                      Pp.212-3.
124. OBS TC Mar 1916. EC Abstract report Feb 2 1916.
125. Ibid
126. OBS Mins of AMGC Aug 1916.
127. Ibid
128. Ibid
129. W S Hilton 1963, P.215.
130. OBS TC June 1916.
131. OBS TC Jan 1917 EC Mins Dec 13 1916.
132. OBS TC Feb 1917.
133. The standing and elitist attitude of stonemasons is reflected  
in A. Somerville's Autobiography of a Working Man.

134. OSM Fortnightly Return. continuous from 1834.
135. eg during the Lock-out of London Building Workers in 1914.
136. Clegg 1964, Pp.351-2.
137. Olsen, . 1976.
138. OSM Jnl Aug 18 1915.
139. OSM 1900 - 19,419  
           1914 - 10,548  
           1918 - 5,384  
           Rose in 1919.
140. OBS TC May 1919.
141. Ibid
142. R. Postgate, 1923. P.435. States that this conference was attended by the NAOP & The Slaters & Tilers. Neither of these societies was represented at this stage, although both subsequently participated in discussions.  
       NFBTO Min bk.
143. NFBTO Min bk of Cognate Trades Amalg. (MB of CTA). Mins of meeting Jul 16 1919. Statement by J. Batchelor (OBS) 'always in favour of amalgamation'; J. Gregory (IUOB) 'his society was in favour of industrial unionism'; and W. Williams (OSM) more continuously 'his society had evolved towards the appreciation of amalgamation'.
144. NFBTO MB of CTA Mins of Jul 16 1919.
145.     "     "     "     "     Oct 18 1919.
146. Hilton, 1963. P.219.
147. NFBTO MB of CTA Mins of meeting Oct 18 1919.
148. Ibid
149. Ibid
150. Ibid

151. CBS TC Feb 1920. Voting in the OBS was
- |                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| In favour of amalg. | 13,210       |
| Against             | <u>1,321</u> |
| Majority            | 11,889       |
152. OBS TC Feb 1920. Printed Council mins 24 Jan 1920.
153. OBS voting was based on the 1919 membership returns of c.41,500.
154. The percentage of members voting on the amalgamation proposals was in fact higher than the voting in the elections for the position of General Secretary in 1919. In the first round of the election of the GS only 22% of members cast their votes.
155. OBS TC May 1920. Voting on the second occasions was:
- |                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| In favour of amalg. | 19,524       |
| Against             | <u>2,179</u> |
| Majority            | 17,345       |
156. NFBTO MB of CTA. Mins of meeting May 14 1920.
157. NFBTO MB of CTA. Mins of a conf. of ECs and organising staff of the 3 unions, 17 Nov 1920.
- View expressed by Bro. Coppock, then of the OBS.
158. 1921 Census of population, shows more masons than bricklayers in Scotland, whilst in England & Wales, bricklayers outnumbered masons almost 3:1.
159. NFBTO MB of CTA Mins of a conference of EC's and organising staff 17 Nov 1920.
160. NFBTO MB of CTA Mins of meeting of Joint EC's 4 Mar 1921. Protests from Preston br. of MUOB. And mins of conf. of EC's and organising staff 17 Nov 1920. Rept of Bro. Rickard, OSM.
161. Ibid Rept of Bro. Moore, OBS re South Wales.
162. Ibid "

163. NFBTO Mins of CTA. Mins of meeting of Executives party to the amalgamation Oct.25 1920.
164. NFBTO MB of CTA Mins of conf. of EC's and Organising Staff 17 Nov 1920.
165. Ibid
166. Ibid
167. NFBTO MB of CTA. AUBTW Mins of meeting of Emerg. Cttee. 13 Jan 1921.
168. NFBTO: AUBTW Rept & mins of a conf. of representatives from each of the Propaganda Cttees of various divisions together with the Emerg. Cttee 1 Jan 1921.
169. NFBTO: MB of CTA AUBTW Mins of special meeting of Joint EC's Feb 3 1921.
170. The unions participating in the merger increased membership & assets during this period

	MUOB	OBS	OSM
1918	2,136	34,441	5,384
1920	4,633	53,719	17,958

171. NFBTO MB of CTA Mins of Conf. 27/28 Aug 1920 & Mins of meeting of 13 Jan 1921.
172. NFBTO MB of CTA Mins of meeting of May 28 1920 & Mins of conf. of EC's and Organising Staffs of the 3 amalgamation unions 17 Nov. 1920.
173. NFBTO MB of CTA Mins of meeting of May 28 1920.
174. NFBTO Min bk of CTA Mins of meeting of Joint EC's 4 Mar 1921.
175. NFBTO Min bk of CTA Mins of meeting of Emerg. Cttee 1 Jan 1921.
176. DNB entry on Hicks, 1951-60. By E. De Normann.
177. eg his letter printed in the OBS TC Aug 1917.
178. for example during the meeting of the Emerg. Cttee 6 Dec 1920. NFBTO MB of CTA 6 Dec 1920.

179. NFBTO Min bk of CTA. Mins of meeting of EC's and Organising Staff of the 3 amalgamating unions, 17 Nov 1920. Contributions by organising staffs.
180. Ibid
181. NFBTO Min bk of CTA Mins of meeting of EC's of the 3 amalgamating unions, 10 Dec 1920.
182. Ibid
183. Ibid
184. Ibid
185. NFBTO Min bk of CTA Rept & mins of conference of representatives of The Propaganda Cttees of various Divisions, together with the Emerg. Cttee, 1st Jan 1921.
186. AUBTW Special Amalg. Circular Mar 1921.
187. " " "
188. " " "
189. " " "
190. " " "
191. OBS TC Aug 1920.
192. AUBTW Rept. of 2nd Nat Del. Conf. 1923. Report of Amalg. discuss. with woodworkers.
193. Ibid
194. Ibid  
Point of view expressed by Hicks.
195. Ibid
196. DWB entry on Hicks & Ch.2 above.
197. DLB entry on Coppock. Mahan, H. Pollitt 1976 pp.18-19 & pp.25-26.
198. AUBTW Rept. of 2nd Nat Del Conf 1923. Rept of Amalg. Discussions with woodworkers.
199. Hugh Dewar, 1976. P.18.

200. AUBTW Rept of 2nd Nat lal Conf 1923.

Voting on the question of the political levy in June 1921

was:	Against the levy	8,188
	In favour	<u>6,257</u>
	Majority against	1,931

and on the question of whether the AUBTW became affiliated to the Nat Lab Party in the event of the political fund voting being carried

	Against	7,854
	In favour	<u>4,913</u>
	Majority against	2,941

201. R. Leeson, 1979.

Autobiographical accounts by masons are more common than for other trades and indicate the extent of literacy and craft pride: eg Fred Bower, 1936.

202. NFBTO Min bk of CTA. AUBTW Rept of conference between The Emerg. Cttee and representatives from the Tile, Faience and Mosaic Fixers Society, 13 Jan 1921.

203. AUBTW TC No.12 May 1922.

204. AUBTW TC No.12 May 1922.

205. Membership of the two societies in 1921 was:

B&MWA -	5,491	AUBTW	75,779
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206. NFBTO Mins of annual meeting Aug 21 1918.

207. H.Heumann 'Pages from our history' DB 1951.

208. Voting of the 4 unions on amalg. was

	In favour	42,704
	Against	2,596

209. H.Heumann DB 1951.

210. " "

211. W S Hilton, 1968. Pp.136-8. The account is based on an interview with Sir Richard Coppock.

212. W S Hilton 1968. Pp. 156-8.
213. Ch.2 above.
214. eg Resolution moved by Bros. Warburton & Whitehead of the EC 'that we still maintain the proper form of organisation of building trade workers in one union, and in that direction amalgamation with the labourers is a most desirable step' etc in AUBTW TC 9(Feb 1922.)
215. AUBTW TC 9(Feb 1922): Amalgamation with the NBC&CWS. Rept.
216. Ibid
217. NFBTO Vol. entitled 'Amalgamation and confederation'  
Vol.1 Rept of meeting of Amalgamation Cttee, Nov 7 1922.
218. NFBTO Rept. of meeting of Amalg. Cttee Nov 28 1922.
219. Ibid Scheme 'A'
220. Ibid minority Rept.
221. R. Coppock The progress of amalg. in the British Building Trade Unions in the AUBTW TC 34 (Mar 1924).
222. AUBTW Rept of 2nd Nat Del Conf. July 1923. Amalg. with Woodworkers.
223. Contributions by Merson and Gould of the ASW.
224. eg Bro. McElwee's contribution suggests something less than enthusiasm.
225. NFBTO EC Mins 1914-18 Mins of meeting May 13 1918.
226. In 1920 the Scottish Operative Masons, the Aberdeen Granite Workers and 2 smaller societies of Stonemasons amalgamated to form the B&MWAS.
227. J. French, Plumbers in unity, 1965. p.114.
228. H. Braverman, 1974.
229. NFBTO Mins. 7 Jul 1925 - Jun 1926. Alternative methods of housing construction.
230. By Gilbreth. cited in Braverman, 1974. P.117.

231. Ch.1. Discussions between unions pre-1914.
232. ASCC&J MJ Aug 1920.
233. Hilton, 1963. P.219.
234. Higenbotham, 1939. P.292.
235. Hilton, 1963. P.219.
236. AUBTW Rept of 2nd Nat. Del. Conf. Amalg. with Woodworkers. Statement by T. Barron.
237. R. Coppock 'The progress of amalgamation in British building trade unions. AUBTW TC 34 (Mar 1924).
238. The OBS was involved in discussions as a result of their approach to the NFBTO and discussions re the formation of the AUBTW were conducted under the auspices of the Federation.
239. AUBTW Rept. of 2nd Nat. Del. Conf. 1923. Amalg. with Woodworkers. Statement by Br. Webster, a local Federation delegate.
240. AUBTW TC No.30 Nov 1923 Amalg. with Woodworkers. Rept. of meeting of Propaganda Cttee Sep 28 1923.
241. NFBTO Min bks. Amalg. Cttee report to the Joint EC's, Jan 5 1923.
242. OBS TC 1918 Nov Lttr from Br. H.J. Philbey, Stoke Newington branch.
243. OBS TC Aug 1917. Hicks on Amalgamation v. Federation.
244. AUBTW Rept. of 2nd Nat Del. Conf. Amalg. with Woodworkers. Statement by Tom Barron.
245. Voting cited above.
246. ASCC&J/GUC&J Min bk re amalg. Min of meeting of 9 Aug 1920. GUC&J GC & EC proceedings and Mins May 26 1920. NFBTO Min bk of Cognate Trades Amalg. Mins of meeting Oct 25 1920.
247. Footnote 209 above.
248. AUBTW Rept. of 2nd Nat. Del. Conf. Amalg. with Woodworkers. Statement by Tom Barron.

## Chapter 4 Footnotes

1. eg L. Mowat Britain between the wars, 1955.  
& S. Pollard The development of the British economy, 1914-50, 1962.
2. Walter Citrine Men and work, 1964. A. Beacon  
Concession and co-ercion. The politics of unemployment  
insurance in the twenties. Essays in labour history  
Vol.3, 1977.
3. A. Howkins & J. Saville. The Nineteen Thirties in  
Socialist Register 1979.
4. R. Miliband, 1961.
5. The Membership 1920-39. From H. Pelling, 1963.

1920	8,348,000	1930	4,842,000
1921	6,633,000	1931	4,624,000
1922	5,625,000	1932	4,444,000
1923	5,429,000	1933	4,392,000
1924	5,544,000	1934	4,590,000
1925	5,506,000	1935	4,867,000
1926	5,219,000	1936	5,295,000
1927	4,919,000	1937	5,842,000
1928	4,800,000	1938	6,053,000
1929	4,858,000	1939	6,298,000
6. S. Merrett State housing in Britain, 1979.  
Richardson & Aldcroft, 1968.
8. S. Merrett cites Mond: (Aug 1911).

'If I saw any real prospect of any general resumption of the building of true working class houses by Private Enterprise, I should not consider any prolongation of state assistance or any modification of the present policy. We have, however to face the fact that Private Enterprise did not really solve this problem before the war and will not solve it in the near future.'

9. R. Miliband, 1961.
10. Report on the present position in the building industry with regard to the carrying out of a full housing programme, having particular reference to the means of providing an adequate supply of labour and materials. PP. 1924 vii 833 (Cmd 2104).
11. NFBTO ACP 1928 Presidential Address.
12. " " " "
13. " " 1930 Emerg. Cttee. AR 1929-30 & ASW MJ Oct 1930.
14. B. Webb Diaries July 26, 1929.
15. Skidelskey - Politicians and the slump, 1967. Comments on the absence of any alternative economic policies within the Labour movement to the orthodox Treasury views.
16. In 1933 speculative builders were responsible for 200,000 completions compared with 60-80,000 houses built under subsidy.
17. R. Coad - Laing biography, 1979.
18. Taylor Woodrow Ltd. Company Rept. 1935.
19. Figs from A. Jackson - Semi-detached London 1973. Comment on interest rates S. Merrett, 1979.
20. Richardson & Aldcroft, 1968.
21. Census of Production 1935 Pt.4.
22. " " 1930 & 1935. A detailed comparison with 1924 C of P is not possible since in that year information was not presented in this form.
23. Higgs and Hills (Company history - booklet), c.1974.
24. R. Coad, 1979.
25. AUBTW 15th Nat. Del. Conf. 1939 Rept No.4 Div. Organiser.
26. " " " " No.2 "
27. Seasonal fluctuations in the painting trade were particularly marked, exacerbated by the effects of cyclical unemployment. The low point was reached in the Winter of 1932/3 when

recorded unemployment amongst painters was over 50%.

28. Richardson & Aldcroft, 1968.
29. NSP MJ 7 (5) Jan 1928; 11 (4) Dec 1931 & 15 (5) Jan 1936.
30. NFBTO ACP 1930: Rationalisation.
31. AUBTW Rept of 12th Nat. Del Conf. 1936. Mechanisation.
32. ASW 15th AR 1934.
33. F. Berry: interview.
34. NFBTO ACP 1930 Rationalisation.  
AUBTW Rept of 15th Nat. Del. Conf. 1939. Discussion on specialisation.
35. Register of Friendly Societies. Returns made by unions.
36. ASW 106th AR 1965:
37. " " "
38. AUBTW 44th AR 1964.
39. NAOP 106th AR 1967.
40. ASP&D 84th AR 1969.

41. Strikes in building 1914-21:

	<u>No. of strikes</u>	<u>Workers involved</u>	<u>Aggregate</u>
1914 (London lock-out)	177	38,000	3,184,000
1915	63	16,000	130,000
1916	73	6,000	103,000
1917	51	7,000	68,000
1918	107	36,000	186,000
1919	134	22,000	391,000
1920	242	42,000	696,000
1921	135	26,000	538,000

42. Bullock 1960. Ch.7.
43. ASW MJ Jan 1921, Sep. 1921 & AR 1921.
44. Appointed under the Industrial Courts Act 1919.  
AUBTW TC Nov. 1922.
45. " " "
46. " " " Rept of sub-cttee re steel works 24 Nov 1921.

47. AUBTW TC no.12 May 1922; rept of no.9 Div. Council.
48. AUBTW TC no.9 Feb 1922; Steel and Iron Works.
49. AUBTW TC 15 Aug 1922.
50. AUBTW TC no.12 May 1922.
51. AUBTW TC no.16 Sep 1922. The new union, named the British Iron and Steel Furnace Builders' and Repairers' Society was set up by a former member of the AUBTW, I.K. Johnson. He contended that the AUBTW did not cater adequately for bricklayers employed in the Iron and Steel Industry.
52. AUBTW TC Nov 1922.
53. NSP MJ Nov 1921.
54. NSP MJ Apr 1924.
55. " "
56. Unemployment amongst building trades.  
See Appendix B.
57. NSP MJ Nov 1921 GS' Remarks.
58. " Feb 1922
59. H.H.'Pages from our history' OB 1955.
60. Nat. Soc. Painters MJ Jan 1924. Rept of Bro V Beacham Dec 16 1923. AUBTW No.3 Div. Co. (Eastern Counties).
61. HH in OB op cit.
62. " " "This Council wishes to place on record its best appreciation of the splendid manner in which the negotiations on this very important question have been pursued, realising the delicate nature of the proceedings and the tremendous issues which were at stake in view of the recent happenings in other industrial spheres."
63. NSP MJ Dec 1923; Rept. on painters in the Eastern Counties.
64. NSP MJ Jan 1924 Bro. V. Beacham's Rept Dec 16 1923.
65. NSP MJ Feb 1928, GS's Remarks.
66. NSP MJ Jul 1928.
67. NFBTO Rule 2 stated that the objects of the organisation

- included the establishment of a uniform rate of wages.
68. Higgenbottam 1939 & Gt. Britain Rept. by a Court of Inquiry concerning the dispute in the building industry, 1924. PP.1924 xi 69 (Cmd.2192).
  69. NFBTO Joint EC's Mins of meeting, 19 Jan 1923.
  70. ASW MJ Jul 1923 NW&CC: Summary of negotiations on wages and hours.
  71. " " " "
  72. NFBTO Mins of meeting of conf. of organisers of societies affiliated to the NFBTO, 26 Jan 1923.
  73. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Special Disputes Cttees, 19 & 21 Mar 1923; and ASW MJ Jul 1923. The results of the ballot were:  
42,606 in favour of employers' terms  
140,952 against " "  
183,558 votes recorded.
  74. NFBTO Special Disputes Cttee, 28-29 Mar 1923.
  75. ASW MJ Jul 1923; NW&CC Summary of negotiations on wages and hours.
  76. " " " " "
  77. ASW MJ Jun 1923: Address.
  78. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Joint EC's, 11 Dec 1922.
  79. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Joint EC's, 4 Jul 1923.
  80. Higgenbottam 1939 P.238.
  81. Rept of a Court of Inquiry concerning the dispute in the building industry, 1924. PP.1294 xi 69 Cmd. 2192.
  82. " " " "
  83. ASW MJ May 1924 Mins of proceedings of Special Meeting of GC, Feb 29 1924.
  84. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Joint EC's 30 Mar 1924.
  85. NFBTO Mins of Emerg.Cttee meeting May 6-7, 1924.

Report on the ballot on wages.

1) In favour of accepting the employers offer of $\frac{1}{2}$ d	13,462
Against	104,001
2) In favour of further negotiation with a view to an improved offer	91,735
Against	34,719
3) In favour of strike failing improved offer	94,104
Against	32,483

86. Rept. Cmd 2192.

87. AUBTW TC Nov 1924. NW&CC Special meeting: 25 Apr 1924.

Rept. on Liverpool. Rates then prevailing there were

Joiners, machinists, painters 1.8 $\frac{1}{2}$

Plasterers, slaters, bricklayers, masons,

plumbers 1.9

Masons fixers 1.9 $\frac{1}{2}$

Navvies and general builders labourers 1.3 $\frac{1}{2}$

Tradesmen's labourers 1.4

Joiners receive 4d per day tool money in addition.

Grade 'A' rate = 1.7d per hour

88. ASW MJ Sep 1924.

"Are we to maintain the policy of national agreements

or are we to revert to a policy of local settlement?

This issue, raised by the Liverpool and Birkenhead action

must be faced by our members... Either we stand loyally

by our present policy of national settlements covering the

entire building industry, or we shall have to go back to

the old sectional methods where each district or town

fought its own battle."

89. Cited in T. Austrin 1979. Ch.1.

90. ASW MJ Sep 1924.

91. See 87. above.

92. RSW Davies - The Liverpool LP and the Liverpool working

class, 1900-39. N.W. Labour History Society Bulletin 6  
(1979-80).

B. Holton Syndicalism and labour on Merseyside in H.R.  
Hikins (Ed.)

93. Higenbottam 1939. P.239.

In favour of offer 69,080

Against 41,547

94. NFBTO Joint EC's Meeting Jun 24-25 1924.

95. Rept. on Court of Inquiry, 1924. (Cmd. 2192).

96. W. Hilton, 1963. Kingsford, 1973.

97. NFBTO Joint EC's Mins. Aug. 1 1924.

98. NFBTO " " Jun 24-25, 1924.

99. NFBTO Joint EC's Mins Aug 1 1924.

100. ASW MJ Sep 1924 National terms of settlement of building  
trade dispute.

101. T. Austrin, 1979. 3,145,000 strike days in 1924.

102. It seems that before 1914 bricklayers received  $\frac{1}{2}$ d an  
hour more than other crafts to compensate for breaks  
in their employment. The loss of this payment during  
war time was the cause of widespread dissatisfaction,  
but the question had never been resolved.

Rept. of Nat. Joint Cttee on time lost through inclement  
weather in NFBTO Vol. of mins, 1925-26 .P.68.

103. AUBTW 5th AR 1925.

104. A questionnaire submitted to representative building trade  
employers in Oct 1920 gave the following returns.

	Av. no. of days lost through weather per year
Bricklayers	20.5
Masons (Wallers)	22.4
Masons (Hewers)	14.4
Slaters	25.0

(Table continued..)

Av. no. of days lost through  
weather per year

Painters	14.9
Plasterers	10.5
Carpenters & joiners	5.3
Plumbers	3.7
Navvies	18.0

AUBTW Rept. of 12th Nat. Del. Conf. Jul 1936. Historical  
review. Lost time.

105. NFBTO ACP 1925 President's comment.
106. NFBTO Emerg. Cttee Mins Jul 14-15 1925.
107. NFBTO Emerg. Cttee Mins Aug 12-13 1925. Voting on the  
new agreement was:
- |                  |               |
|------------------|---------------|
| In favour        | 55,230        |
| Against          | <u>16,402</u> |
| Majority         | 38,828        |
| Total votes cast | 71,632        |
108. ASW MJ Jan 1926. Proposed NJCBI Rept. of discussions of  
May 28 & Oct 1 1925.
109. NFBTO ACP 1926.
110. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Joint Execs. 13 Jul 1926.
111. NFBTO ACP Jun 1928.  
ASW MJ's Mar-Apr 1930.
112. ASW MJ Mar 1930. Br. resolutions and Ittrs. See Appendix A.
113. ASW MJ Mar 1930. EC Address.
114. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Joint EC's Sep 26 1930.
115. " " " " "
116. " " " " "
117. ASW MJ Nov 1930.
118. ASW MJ Mar 1928. Prevention of disputes in the building  
trade - agreement Jul 8 1927.
119. " " " "

120. NJCBI Constitution and Working Rules 14 Jan 1932.
121. " " "
122. " " "
123. NFBTO Mins 1930. Nat. Joint Commission on the situation in Scotland, Mar 24 1930.
124. NJCBI Annual meeting Mar 28 1930.
125. NFBTO ACP 1931: Emerg. Cttee's AR 1930-31.
126. NFBTO EC Mins 22-23 Nov 1923. Report of the Irish Commission.
127. NFBTO Mins 1934-5: Conf of Emerg. Cttee, Irish Regional Council, EC Reps and Full time officers of affiliated societies operating in Ireland, Feb 19 1935.
128. NFBTO " " "
129. NFBTO ACP 1927 Coppock Statement on Civil Engineering.
130. NFBTO ACP 1927 " " "
131. NFBTO ACP 1932 Motion on civil engineering rates, comment by Beard.
132. NI " " "
133. NFBTO ACP 1931. Emerg. Cttees AR 1930-31.
134. Richardson & Aldcroft, 1968. P.131. See Appendix A.
135. NFBTO Emerg. Cttee Mins Dec 20-21 1934.
136. NFBTO Mins of meeting of Joint EC's Apr 15, 1935.
137. " " "
138. NFBTO ACP Emerg. Cttee AR 1934-5. Wages movements.
139. " Mins of meetings of joint EC's Apr 15 1935.
140. NFBTO ACP 1938. Wages.
141. NFBTO ACP 1937. Wages.
142. NBL 1 Oct 1935; R. Martin, 1969.
143. NBL "
144. NBL 1935-8.
145. Harry Weaver & Frank Jackson: interviews. Harry Adams

- was expelled from the CP during the second world war.
146. Harry Weaver NEL Aug 1938.
  147. NBL 1935-9.
  148. Higenbottam, 1939.
  149. ASW GC Mins, June 1924.
  150. ASC&J. Registration books list membership of overseas as well as of British branches.
  151. ASW GC Min Jun 1922, Jul 1923 & June 1924.
  152. J. Youngs: Interview.
  153. NBL Dec 1935. Lttr from H. Davy, Hull 2nd Br. ASW.
  154. AUBTW Special Cttee re Organising Rept. in AUBTW TC 21 Feb 1923.
  155. AUBTW EC Resolution 4 Mar 1921.
  156. AUBTW Rulebk 1928.
  157. Hilton 1963.
  158. NSP MJ Vol.1 no.3 Nov 1921.
  159. NSP MJ Vol.7 no.6.
  160. " "
  161. NBL Dec 1935.
  162. NBL Aug 1936.
  163. NBL Sep 1936.
  164. The others being the PIKTF & The CSEU.
  165. NFBTO ACP 1933 Emerg. Cttee's AR 1932-3 Appendix C.
  166. NFBTO ACP 1921 (Perth) Applications for affiliation by the NUGW & The Workers Union.
  167. The 'A' members were directly connected with the composite section, whilst the 'B' members retained a connection with an individual trade society.
  168. NFBTO ACP 1924. Composite branches.
  169. " " "
  170. NFBTO ACP 1922.
  171. " " .

172. The issue was a contentious one during the 1924 dispute when H. McPherson of the B&I/WAS stressed the importance of involving the whole of the Federation's affiliated membership in the decisions. The Joint EC's benefitted the small unions, by allowing them full representation although a card vote could be used in close votes. NFBTO ACP 1924.
173. Scheme for Confed. of Building Trades 1925. Supplied by Bill Smart, who received it from G. Hicks.
174. F. Wolstencroft was then around 42. He retired in 1948.
175. NFBTO ACP 1926.
176. AUBTW AR 1924.
177. NFBTO Min bk 1925-26 : Alternative methods of housing construction. The operatives' position,
178. " " "
179. NFBTO 8th ACP 1925. Woodcutting machinists and Weir Houses.
180. " " "
181. " " "
182. NFBTO ACP 1926.
183. Coppock, Pamphlet on Fed. finance.
184. ASW GC Mins of Special Meeting Jul 16 1925.
185. ASW GC Mins of Special Meeting Jul 16 1925.
186. NFBTO Emerg. Cttee Mins May 10-13, 1926.
187. " " " "
188. " " " "
189. " " " "
190. " " " "
191. AUBTW TC Jun 1926. Rept. of EC Sub Cttee appointed in connection with the General Strike.
192. " " "

193. ASW MJ June 1926. EC address.
194. " " "
195. NFBTO ACP 1928.
196. NFBTO ACP 1929.
197. " " "
198. NFBTO Chester Conference, 1930, Printed Rept.  
 Speeches by Wolstencroft & Major of the ASW & NFBTO  
ACP 1931. Speech by F. Wolstencroft.
199. NFBTO Chester Conference, 1930. Printed Rept.
200. AUBTW Nat. Del. Conf. 1931. Discussion on amalgamation  
 Bro. Spencer, Div. 8. Mersey District.
201. When the union Executives reported back to the Chester  
 Conf. few of them were unequivocally in favour of the  
 amalgamation scheme. Most were prepared to submit the  
 issue to their members, but hesitated about the details.
202. NFBTO ACP 1924.
203. ASW Mins of GC May-June 1936.
204. NFBTO ACP 1936 Constitution amendments.
205. " " "
206. ASW Mins of GC May-June 1936.
207. NFBTO ACP 1937.
- |                               |               |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| ASW Vote on NFBTO affiliation |               |
| In favour of withdrawal       | 16,600        |
| Against                       | <u>17,284</u> |
| Majority against              | 684           |
208. NFBTO ACP 1937.
209. " " "
210. " " "
211. " " "
212. NFBTO AR 1938.
213. T&G - 30,200.  
 G&M - 17,500.

214. A. Marsh, 1965. PP.10-22.

215. " "

216. NBL Jul 1938.

## Chapter 5. Footnotes

1. Bain & Price. EJIR 14(3) (Nov 1976).
2. Bullock, 1960.
3. Calder, 1969. F.58.
4. eg The conscription of women and direction of labour to the mines.
5. P. Foot's, The politics of Harold Wilson, Penguin, 1968.
6. NFBTO, ACP 1939.
7. Problems of the building industry. A pamphlet by Marx House Association in conjunction with The New Builders Leader. Figures are quoted from the Ministry of Labour.
8. NFBTE HB 19(4) Nov. 1939.
9. Howlem, 1822-1972: 150 years of construction.
10. R. Coad - Laing: A biography, 1979.
11. NFBTE MB Nov. 1939.
12. " " Jun 1940.
13. " " Dec 1942.
14. The employment capacity of firms over 5,000 operatives rose between July 1942 and Oct 1943 from 7,377 ops per firm to 8,236 ops per firm. But the trend was qualified by the changing pattern of building operations and the cut back in large scale building projects from early in 1942. At a general level there was a tendency during the war years for the size of firms to decrease when measured in terms of the no. of operatives employed because of the considerable over-all reduction in the size of the workforce and the changed nature of building production in the last half of the war, eg when the employers shifted to repair and construction.

Classification By Size Of Employing Firm	July 1941		January 1942		May 1942		November 1942		October 1943	
	000's	% of Total Opera- tives	000's	% of Total Opera- tives	000's	% of Total Opera- tives	000's	% of Total Opera- tives	000's	% of Total Opera- tives
Employing:										
1- 19 operatives	216.5	22.2	190.9	24.6	185.2	25.0	161.2	25.8	155.7	30.4
20- 99 "	212.7	21.7	183.6	23.6	172.3	23.4	134.7	21.6	132.4	25.8
100- 499 "	198.0	20.2	151.2	19.5	141.8	19.3	123.7	19.8	95.6	18.7
500- 999 "	69.1	7.1	48.8	6.3	48.1	6.5	39.5	6.3	36.7	7.2
1000-4999 "	163.6	16.7	127.7	16.4	125.1	17.0	118.4	18.9	67.4	13.1
Over 5000 "	118.0	12.1	74.7	9.6	64.7	8.8	47.7	7.6	24.7	4.8
TOTAL	977.9	100.0	776.9	100.0	737.2	100.0	625.2	100.0	512.5	100.0

15. R. Coad, 1979.

16. Cmd 6593.

17. NFBTE NB Jul 1945 Company Finance.

Geo, Wimpey

	1942	1943	1944
Net Profit	£92,460	£127,895	£119,514

Taylor Woodrow was involved over the war years in the construction of Mulberry Harbours & airfields. John Laings was noted for work on aerodromes.

18. Problems of the building industry. Issued by Marx House.

19. Bullock 1960. P.25.

20. W.S. Hilton 1963. P.254.

21. " " & NBL Jul 1940 P.12.

22. NFBTO ACP 1940.

23. NBL Jul 1940.

24. NFBTO ACP 1940.

25. " " " Speech by Wolstencroft of the ASW.

26. NFBTU ACP 1940.

27. " " " Coppock.

28. " "

29. NBL Mar 1942 7(4).

30. NB 20 (11) (Jun 1941)

31. NB 20 (11) (June 1941) Les Wood, 1979

32. NFBTO ACP 1941.

33. " " "

34. " " "

35. J. Leonard (AUBTW Interview)

36. NFBTO ACP 1941.

37. " "

38. " "

39. ie The Perth Agreement

40. Bullock, 1960. P.158.
41. ASW MJ Apr 1942. NFBTC Mins of adjourned meeting of joint EC's 14 Nov 1941.
42. Bullock 1960 P.159.  
NB Vol 22 Aug 1942.
43. Bullock, 1960. P.160.
44. NFBTO ACP 1942.
45. " " "
46. " " " This was the case in the Painters Society where the rules provided that men over 21 years of age who earned their living in the painting trade at the standard rate of wages could be admitted to the Society. But in some branches application for membership was turned down by craft conscious members in circumstances which did not accord strictly with the rules. Painters, who were the most readily subject to incursions into their trade by the unskilled, particularly in times of high unemployment, sometimes exhibited strong craft pretensions, as though this were a means of ensuring their superior status. They are illustrated by the suggestion that the painter might 'wear a gold watch and chain, and should anyone speak to you immediately answer "I'm a sign and ticket writer".'
- NBL Dec 1941 7(1).
47. The Co-operative Wholesale Society for example which owned a number of large establishments employed craftsmen on the work of general labourers.
48. NFBTO ACP 1942. A resolution proposing that attention be given to this question by the Joint Executive Councils so that general craftsmen might be organised within the NFBTO was lost, on a card vote, by 144,569 to 129,608, against opposition from the ASW. It was within the individual unions that changes were subsequently effected. See below.

49. ASW IJ Apr 1942.
50. ASW MJ Aug 1944. Extracts from the Ministry of Labour and National Service. Production and Engineering Bulletin.
51. NFBTO AR 1942. Appendix A.
52. NSP MJ 23 May 1944.
53. NSP MJ 23 Nov 1943.
54. DLB On Coppock.
55. DNE on Hicks.
56. NFBTO ACP 1942. EC's AR.
57. The exceptions are of course the Regional Secretary/ Organisers of the NFBTO but there was only one to a region and they were therefore rather thin on the ground.
58. W. Martin Interview formerly ASW Exec.
59. W. Martin: Interview.
60. ASW MJ Apr 1944. NFBTO GC Mins. 2 Dec 1943.
61. NFBTO AR 1945.
62. L. Wood, 1979. Points to the value of site offices to the war effort.
63. W. Martin - Interview.
64. NFBTO ACP 1948.
65. NBL Apr 1942 Vol 7 no.5. At the first informal meeting 26 stewards were present and it was agreed that, subject to ratification by the EC regular monthly meetings would be held.
66. Knowles, 1967.
67. W. Hilton 1963. P.259.
68. NB May 1945.
69. NB May 1945.
70. W. Hilton 1963. P.259.
71. NFBTO AR 1942.
72. W. Hilton 1963 P.260-261.
73. Described by Hilton, 1963.

74. NFBTO ACP 1942.
75. ASW MJ June 1948. NFBTO Around the regions: Scotland.
76. NFBTO ACP 1946. Interview John Leonard of the AUBTW, Div. Organiser of the AUBTW for No.10 Div, Scotland and N. Ireland. Subsequently AGS of the AUBTW, 1952-62 and President 1962-71.
77. NFBTO ACP 1946.
78. NFBTO ACP 1942.
79. NFBTO ACP 1944.
80. NFBTO ACP 1942.
81. NFBTO ACP 1944.
82. NFBTO EC Mins 12 June 1945 Appendix A.
83. A. Calder, 1969.
84. NB Feb 1945. Rept. of AGM of the NFBTE.
85. NB " " "
86. NFBTO ACP 1945.
87. NFBTO ACP 1946. Comment of Rt. Hon. George Tomlinson, MP, Min. of Works.
88. " "
89. NFBTO AR 1946.
90. NFBTE: An outline history. In vol of NFBTE Repts., 1977-8.
91. NB Feb 1952. NFBTE 7th AR 1951.
92. NFBTU ACP 1953.
93. NB Jul 1948.
94. Total building & civil engineering:  
Jul 1939 - 1,361, 820. 1948 - 1,128,020.  
ASW MJ June 1950.
95. L. Wood, 1979.
96. ASW MJ Jul 1946. GC Special meeting 16 May 1941.
97. Working Party on Building Operations, HMSO, 1950.
98. Simon Cttee Ev. 11. Cited in NFBTO Inquiry into the building industry, 1948.
99. NFBTO Enquiry into the building industry, 1948.

100. ASW MJ Jul 1948. EC rept to the GC, Jun 1948.
101. NFBTO Enquiry into the building industry, 1948.
102. Problems of the building industry NBL & Marx House P.24.
103. ABT Pamphlet Housing problems (c.1943?)
104. R. Miles Interview (former AUBTW EC member)
105. " " "
106. ASW MJ Feb 1946. EC Mins 6 Sep 1945.
107. eg CP Housing Advisory Cttee Post-war housing problems, CP, 1945. On the widespread application of pre-fabricated techniques.
108. Phelps-Brown: Report of the Committee of Inquiry into certain matters concerning labour in building and civil engineering.
109. " Para.363.
110. " Para.353.
111. Between Dec 1945 and Dec 1946 279,936 tenders were approved for local authorities and although by the end of this period 154,456 houses were under construction only 23,923 were completed in this sector during the course of the year. In the private sector there were 70,944 licences authorized over the same period yet by Dec 1946 33,118 houses were under construction yet 28,175 were completed, that is more than in the public sector.
112. N. Rosenberg, 1960.
113. See Appendix C.
114. NFBTO ACP 1945.
115. NFBTO GC Mins 20 Sep 1945.
116. NBL Oct 1945 11(1).
117. NFBTO GC Mins 20 Sep 1945. Indicates that it was necessary to examine closely the form of organisation that had been set up "It was felt by the Committee that something must be done to keep control of the position as the

affiliated unions were now asking whether the organisation was one that had received official recognition by us. The body was entirely unofficial but it had attempted without success to negotiate directly with the Minister of Works and other Government departments."

118. NBL Nov & Dec 1945.
119. NBL Dec 1945 & NFBTO EC Mins 13 Nov 1945.
120. NFBTO GC Mins 6 Dec 1945.  
ASW MJ Jul 1946.
121. NFBTO AR 1947.
122. " " "
123. NFBTO ACP 1947.
124. The results of the ballot on incentive payments & 3d an hour increase was:  
In favour - 165,606. Against - 77,868.  
Majority in favour - 87,738.
125. Wages and Incentives Agreement - 1948. Reproduced in NBL Dec 1947.
126. NB Nov 1947.
127. NFBTO ACP 1947.
128. NFBTO ACP 1949.
129. NFBTO ACP 1949.
130. W. Martin: Interview; J. Mils! Interview.
131. NFBTO ACP 1948.
132. R. Miles: Interview.
133. NFBTO AR 1949.
134. NFBTO ACP 1951.
135. eg Sub-contractors who operated on a 'supply and fix' basis could be regarded as bona fide sub contractors. Others operated with some equipment - scaffolding for bricklayers for example and might fall in between the category of 'bona fide' and 'labour only' - especially

where some men were employed on orthodox basis and some were not.

136. NFBTO ACP 1951.
137. NFBTO AR 1951.
138. NFBTO ACP 1952. An example of the discrepancy between basic rates and lump payments is given. 'It takes an average plasterer 46½ hours to plaster out one of these houses. I know where they do it in 32 hours on this nefarious scheme. For a man who does it in London it is £8.2.9. for 46½ hour week, but on the £178 (ie the lump sum) divided equally between the two plasterers and the labourers, it works out at £14.6.8.'
139. M. Gagg in R. Fraser (Ed.) 1969.
140. NFBTO ACP 1951.
141. NFBTO ACPS 1950s.
142. NFBTO MR 1953.
143. " AR 1953.
144. " ACP 1953.
145. NFBTO ACP 1953, & L.Poupard Interview.
146. NFBTO ACP 1955.
147. NFBTO ACP 1959.
148. " " 1958 & 1959 Contribution of AG Austin of the MSP.
149. Two attempts were made, in 1958 and 1959 and both were lost on card votes.
150. Jenkins, 1971. Ch.6.
151. NFBTO ACP 1949.
152. L. Wood: Interview.
153. NFBTO ACP 1952.
154. NFBTO ACP 1953 & 1955.
155. NFBTO ACP 1952.
156. NFBTO ACP 1955. Coppock (again!)
157. NFBTO ACP 1955.

158. NFBTO CE 1955.
159. NFBTO AR 1945.
160. eg NFBTO ACP's 1951 and 1954.
161. NFBTO AR 1946.
162. NFBTO ACP 1948.
163. NFBTO GC Mins 15-16 Sep 1960.
164. NFBTO ACP 1951.
165. R. Miles: Interview & Cameron Rept.
166. NFBTO ACP 1948. NFBTO Handbook of Industrial Agreements & Conditions 1957.
167. " "
168. Conference on new technologies & NFBTO ACP 1959.
169. NFBTO ACP 1962. Luke Fawcett's comment. Societies (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1940.
170. ASW MJ Aug 1944 no.8.
171. "We were able effectively to demonstrate that within the Federation we had a machine that was capable of dealing with all the industrial issues in the building industry." NFBTO GC Mins 23 Mar 1944 - in ASW MJ Aug 1944.
172. NFBTO ACP 1940.
173. NFBTO ACP 1945.
174. NFBTO ACP 1946.
175. NFBTO ACP 1953.
176. M. Gagg in R. Fraser (Ed.) 1969.
177. Bain & Price BJIR 14(3) (Nov 1976).
178. Clegg & McCarthy. The distribution and turnover of the membership of the ASW. Unpublished paper, c.1960.
179. Norman Kennedy, a CP member, subsequently to renege on his political commitments and elected to EC, was major correspondent in the union journal on the subject. eg MW IJ Mar 1942 & Jan 1944.
180. Details of the campaign for the creation and development

of the ADM are given in V.I. Allen, 1954, Appendix A.

181. ASW MJ Jan 1946.
182. ASW MJ Feb 1948.
183. Members of the EC, the GC and national organisers all attended conference.
184. V. Allen, 1954.
185. Account based on V. Allen, 1954.
186. J. England BJIR Mar 1979. ASW Rulebk 1952.
187. J. England " "
188. ASW MJ Nov 1948.
189. ASW MJ Nov 1948.
190. ASW MJ Jul 1954.
191. " " The two Kent Cttees merged, and delegate conferences were held in Essex, with the view to setting up one MC.
192. eg NFBTO ACP 1951 & 1953.
193. AWS MJ May 1950 & Sam Reading, personal interview.
194. NFBTO ACP 1951.
195. Membership returns to Registrar.
196. ASW AR's 1940 and 1959.
197. See Appendix C.
198. AUBTW Rulebk 1921.
199. AUBTW Partial alteration of rules. 1946.
200. " Rulebk amendments, 1956.
201. W. Hilton, 1963. Fawcett stood against Harry Adams  
The results were: Adams 3,284  
Fawcett 13,336  
Adams was subsequently elected as President of the union.
202. B&TWAS - 1921 - 5,491  
1931 - 5,199  
1939 - 6,517  
1941 - 5,233

- 203. J. Leonard: Interview.
- 204. " "
- 205. Hilton, 1963. P.273.
- 206. " "
- 207. G. Lowthian: Interview.
- 208. AUBTW Coventry District Min bk; Mins of meetings, 1948-1951. esp. Mins of meeting 27 Jan 1951.
- 209. AUBTW AR 1952 GS's comment.
- 210. AUBTW Rulebk 1953.
- 211. ASP&D 84th AR 1969 & NSP MJ Sep 1955. Membership figs. See Appendix C.
- 212. NSP MJ Sep 1943.
- 213. NSP MJ Nov 1943.
- 214. NSP MJ May 1944. EC Mins 17 Mar 1944.
- 215. J. England BJIR 17(1) (Mar 1979)

The GC comprised of 9 members elected by members of the Society from within 9 districts. The EC had 5 members and for the purposes of nomination and representation the Society was carved into 5 geographical divisions.

- 216. NSP MJ Sep 1955.
- 217. NSP MJ Apr 1948. Accounts of negotiations with SPS & MJ Sep 1955 Financial crisis in union.
- 218. NSP MJ Sep 1955.
- 219. NSP MJ Dec 1955.
- 220. NSP MJ Apr 1956.
- 221. DLB entry on Coppock.
- 222. Coppock was originally appointed to the position of GS, but alterations to the rules of the NFBTO in 1924 required his election and re-election every 6 years. NFBTO ACP 1924.
- 223. J. Young: Interview.
- 224. NFBTO ACP 1959.

225. ASW MJ Feb 1946. Includes NFBTO LC Mins 10 Jul 1945 Reports a meeting between Federation stewards and TU leaders. The stewards had participated in an unofficial movement which had grown up around the hostel accommodating building trades operatives engaged on repair work.
226. ASW MJ Feb 1948 'Notes on functions and duties of stewards'.
227. McCarthy & Clegg. Indicates that shortage of stewards was most often regarded as a major obstacle to recruitment and retention of members in the absence of a closed shop.
228. NFBTO ACP 1954.
229. NFBTO ACP 1954.
230. ASW MJ 1956 Mar.
231. NBL 1945 - 51.
232. W. Wyatt, 1956.
233. NBL Apr 1950 & M. Harrison. TU's and LP since 1945. P.53.
234. NSP EC Mins 13-14 Dec 1955. Esp re activities within The London DC and its supports for the Daily Worker.
235. J. Youngs: Interview.
236. NFBTO ACP 1959.
237. A Conference on New Techniques was held in Apr 1959 under the auspices of the NFBTO.

Chapter 6. Footnotes

1. R.Price & G.S. Bain BJIR 14(3)(Nov 1976).
2. See below Ch.6 Pt.3 discussion on union structure.
3. NFBTE 93rd AR 1970

Index of Building Production            1963 = 100

(Work at Constant 1963 prices)

	1st Quarter	2nd Quarter	3rd Quarter	4th Quarter	Annual Average
1958	82	83	83	84	83
1959	85	87	88	90	88
1960	90	92	92	95	93
1961	96	100	101	99	99
1962	98	102	103	96	100
1963	84	103	105	108	100
1964	107	113	112	113	111
1965	113	114	114	115	114
1966	110	116	117	117	115
1967	114	119	122	120	119
1968	117	123	123	122	121
1969	114	123	120	117	118
1970	110	117			

Manpower : see below.

4. NFBTE 87th AR 1964.

Houses completed (GB)

	Total	By private builders	Private builders % of total
1951	194,831	21,062	10.8
1952	239,992	33,559	13.9
1953	318,779	62,121	19.5
1954	347,605	90,346	26.0
1955	316,995	113,457	35.8
1956	300,225	124,161	41.3
1957	301,090	126,455	42.0

	Total	By private builders	Private builders % of total
1958	273,695	128,148	46.8
1959	276,674	150,708	65.4
1960	297,818	168,629	56.6
1961	296,-62	177,513	60.0
1962	305,428	174,800	57.2
1963	298,872	174,864	58.5
1964	335,763	197,643	58.8

5. ASW AR 1962.
6. NFBTO AR 1968. S. Merrett, 1969.
7. NFBTO ACP 1962.
8. AUBTW 41st NDC 1970.
9. NFBTO ACP 1962 Discussion on Industrialised Building Techniques.
10. Relations between the Woodworkers & the Plasterers were often soured by the question of fixing plasterboard & pre-fabricated partition walling. With the painters too there were demarcation problems and on one occasion Albert Austin, the Painters General Secretary, suggested that the carpenter had added to his tools a brush for wall-paper hanging.
11. Figs, cited in J. Jacobs Unpublished (Draft) on Building Policy from P. Trench, Chairman of Y.J. Lovell in a lecture to the Institute of Building.

1966 - 112,000	1967 - 104,000	1968 - 95,000
1969 - 86,000	1970 - 75,000	
12. Min. of Technology Building Operatives Work (2 Vols) HMSO 1966.
13. NFBTO ACP 1965 & " " "
14. Norman Grummitt The need for stability in Construction. News 2(3) (Mar 1976)

15. G. Lowthian: Interview - On changes in technique & apprenticeships.
16. T. Austin: Thesis, 1978.
17. L.Wood & J. Youngs: Interviews.
18. G. Lowthian: Interview.
19. J. Youngs: Interview.
20. NFBTO ACP 1963 eg Speech by Leo McGree.
21. J. Connelly, 1960.
22. NFBTE AR 1960; NFBTO EC's AR 1959-60 & NFBTO ACP 1961.
23. ASP&D IJ Sep 1963.
24. The account of the 1963 strike and settlement is based on the NFBTO ACP 1964 and the EC's AR 1963-4; The NFBTE's 86th AR 1963, the ASW MJ 1963 and the ASP&D MJ 1963. Also J. Colclough The Construction Industry of G.B. PP. 131-2.
25. ASP&D MJ Nov 1963 & NFBTO ACP 1964.
26. NFBTO ACP 1965 & 1966 & EC's AR 1965/6. Also R. Miles, AUBTW, EC. Interview.
27. NFBTO EC Mins 11 Oct 1966.
28. NFBTE 89th AR 1966.
29. NFBTO ACP 1965.
30. NFBTO ACP EC's AR 1963/4.
31. Min. of Tech: BRS: Building operatives' work. 2 Vols. HMSO, 1966.
32. At Barbican & Horseferry Road, Cmd. 3396, HMSO, 1967.
33. Rept. of the Cttee of Inquiry under Prof. E.H. Phelps-Brown into certain matters concerning labour in building and civil engineering. (Cmd. 3714) HMSO, 1968.
34. NFBTO ACP 1969. EC's AR 1968-9.
35. " " "
36. NBPI Reps. 91-93. A separate agreement existed for ancillary industries. The report of the NBPI on this

area (Rept.no.93) questioned the logic of separate negotiations if the pay and conditions of the building industry were to be applied in any case.

37. George Smith for example supported the Labour Govt.s Incomes policy.
38. NFBTO ACP 1969 & EC's AR 1968-9.
39. NFCU ACP 1970.
40. M. Gagg in R. Fraser (Ed.) 1969.
41. NFBTO ACP 1961.
42. " " "
43. NFBTO ACP 1962 & 1966 EC's AR 1965/6.
44. Phelps Brown Rept. Para.327-8.
45. NFBTO ACP 1967 & 1969: & L. Woods: Interview.
46. NFBTO ACP 1964.
47. " " "
48. Phelps-Brown. Rept. Para.380.
49. NFBTO ACP 1964.
50. NFBTE 91st AR 1968.
51. NFBTE 93rd AR 1970. The Construction Industry Contracts Bill.
52. Strikes in construction From J.E. Cronin - Industrial conflict in modern Britain.

1961	286	1966	265
1962	316	1967	256
1963	168	1968	276
1964	222	1969	285
1965	261	1970	337
53. Hyman, 1972. P.30.
54. R. Staines. Personnel Manager Costain's UK Ltd. Interview.

On recruitment of labour:

"It is a sensitive area and it is dealt with formally.

A lot of screening is carried out. 'We don't take on bother boys, put it like that.' The operation of a blacklist is well-known in the industry and it is reported to be difficult for anyone who has held a steward's card to find subsequent employment.

55. T. Austin, Ph.D. Thesis. Organisation in Liverpool.
56. R. Staines, Interview.
57. " " "
58. J. England op cit. P.4.
59. Report of a Court of Inquiry into trade disputes at the Barbican and Horseferry road construction sites in London. (Cmnd. 3396) HMSO, 1967.
60. " " " " Para.24.
61. NFBTO Central Cttee Mins 14 Dec 1966.
62. Cameron, op.cit.
63. J. Roots Del. from No.1 (London) Div. AUBTW 40th Nat. Del Conf. 1967.
64. AUBTW 40th Nat Del Conf. 1967.
65. S.J. Dimmock - John Laings Company Agreement. Warwick MA, 1970.
66. Phelps Brown, Rept. op cit Paras.490-492.
67. S.J. Dimmock, Thesis, op cit.
68. The advantages of the closed shop to the employer have been given attention elsewhere, but in the construction industry it was labour-only sub-contracting which was used to control the independence of workers at the grass-roots.
69. NBPI Rept no.93 & Building with direct labour: local authority building and the crisis in the construction industry. CSE Housing Workshop, 1978.
70. NBPI Rept.no.93 Indicates that on local authority earnings reported average figs. conceal a substantial area

of low earnings in the smaller authorities.

71. The ASW rulebook stated simply that stewards should be elected by a majority vote of members on each job, shop or site (ASW Rulebk 1970). The Rules of the ASF&D made no formal provision for the election of stewards.
72. There is enormous variation in the operation and conduct of bonus schemes. The attitude of the main contracting firm, the size of the job, the nature of the undertaking, the degree of responsibility allowed to site management and the level of unionisation and the attitudes of the workforce all play a part. Some large companies - for example Costains UK Ltd. now have an Incentives Department which examines the Bill of Estimates to see the price allowed for labour and to work out on a detailed basis the bonus payment which could be made. But this was established only at the end of the 60's and prior to its formation the decision rested with line management (Interview R. Staines Costain UK Ltd.). Firms such as Taylor Woodrow & John Laings had operated bonus schemes since pre-world war 2 (ie before it was formally accepted in the war). See P. Jenkins & R. Coad. In practice it seems there was considerable leeway for the settlement of rates on site in the 60's, depending on the attitudes of site management and the willingness of the operatives to put up a fight.
73. L. Wood, 1979 op cit. P.38. These comments were made with particular reference to the 1972 strike but feature as part of a general discussion in 'who leads the union'. They are equally appropriate to the second half of the 60's.

74. L. Wood - Interview. It seems that there were no comparable gatherings of stewards within the AUSTW. Rept. of ASP&D Conference 1967/8.
75. Rept. ... into disputes at the Barbican & Horseferry road. (Cmnd.3396). T. Austin - Ph.D. Thesis; H. Mathiesson - M.A. Thesis.
76. T. Austin, Ph.D. Thesis, Ch.8.
77. " "
78. M. Rooke - MA Thesis - On Nottingham. Describes devt. of Charter Group in Nottingham, but acknowledges its rapid demise after the 1972 strike.
79. T. Austin, Ph.D. Thesis.
80. L. Wood, 1979, op cit.
81. T. Austin, Ph.D. Thesis Ch.8,
82. IRRR 180 (Jul 1978). ASW Rept. EC Rept on Amalg. 1964.
83. TUC Rept. 1964.
84. Grunfield 1966. Modern trade union law.
85. " " Elias, Industrial Law Journal, 1973.
86. Rept. of the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers Associations (Donovan Commission).
87. NUFTO Report on amalgamation talks. Extract from the GEC Rept. to ... the Biennial Conference of the Union, May 1965.
88. For example the Barbican, Horseferry Road, Shellmex Building and Fiddlers Ferry.
89. Donovan Commission, Para.682.
90. NFBTO ACP 1962.
91. NFBTE AR 1964.
92. NFBTE AR 1970.
93. These figs. are taken from the returns made to the Reg. of Friendly Socs. for 1961-66 and from union reports thereafter. Figs. in union reports tended where comparisons

were made for the same year to be slightly higher than those submitted for official record so this table may understate the decline in union membership during the 60's. No allowance has been made for the fact that the ASW was increased by assimilation of the Nat. Union of Packing Case Makers in 1964 with 3,182 members. And the size of the AUBTW was increased by merger with the Street Masons & Pavers in 1967 with 1,037 members and the Slaters & Tilers with some 1,500 members so this is further reason to assume that the case is understated. The figs for the NAOP for 1970 is estimated on the basis of the craft section returns for the Building Trade Group within the T&GW. Figs. for the Plumbers for 1968 and 1970 following their merger with the ETU were supplied by Ch. Lovell GS of the Plumbers Section of the merged unions.

94. Bain & Price BTIR 14(3) (Nov 1976) show a decline in overall union and density between 1948 and 1966 and a rise thereafter:

Total tu density (UK) 1948-1971.

1948	-	45.2%
1958	-	43.2%
1961	-	42.9%
1966	-	42.6%
1971	-	47.9%

By contrast they show a consistent decline in union density in construction 1948-1974 from 45.3% to 27.2%, which bears out the assertions made above concerning decline in density by trade.

95. Since some declared 'self-employed' were genuine self-employed it is impossible to use this category to quantify the trend towards 'labour-only' during the 60's. Estimates

varied enormously - between 250,000 and 500,000

workers were engaged on the 'lump' after the introduction of SFT it was suggested.

96. NFBTO ACP's 1960 & 1962; NFBTO EC Mins. 1960 Oct. -1962 Jan comprising reports of the Working Party on Amalgamation.
97. ASW AR's 1962-9; ASF&D AR 1969; AUEFTW AR's 1964-9.
98. NFBTO ACP 1962 Statements by representatives of the ASW.
99. ASWM & NUFTO memb. & finance.
100. S. Reading Interview: NUPCM AR 1963 & NUPCM Rulebk 1962. 2 files of corres. re transfer of engagements of NUPCM to ASW.
101. NFBTO EC Mins Feb 5 1963. TUC: TU structure Woodworking Trades: Rept. of conference of representatives of woodworking trade unions, Mar 17 1964.
102. " " "
103. S. Lynch, MA Thesis. Warwick 1971.
104. TUC Trade Union Structure. Woodworking trades Reprt. of meeting, May 19, 1965.
105. W. Martin: Interview.
106. S. Lynch, MA Thesis.
107. A. Black & J. Leonard & G. Lowthian: Interviews.
108. NUFTO GEC Meetings Nov 19 1965.  
ASW EC Mins Oct 1965, 1229/65.
109. GEC on Amalg. NUFTO 1965. Biennial Del. Conf,
110. ASW Suggested new structure to absorb other societies. Devised by Les Wood then AGS of the ASW.
111. NUFTO GEC Mins Feb 18 1966.
112. S. Lynch MA Thesis.
113. NUFTO GEC Mins 18-19 Aug 1966. A ltr was rec'd from the GS of the ASWA indicating that they would be prepared to

- attend a joint meeting of representatives of the ICI, NUFTO & themselves. A letter was also received from the TUC proposing a joint meeting with the ASU & ASMT.
114. ASW AR 1964. Of the other small woodworking unions, the United French Polishers transferred into NUFTO in 1969. The Union of Basket, Cane and Fibre Furniture Makers and the Coopers Federation remained independent, even after the formation of UCATT & FTAT.
115. NFBTO EC Mins: Mins of meeting of reps of some affiliated unions, Dec 13 1962 & Mins of meeting Mar 18 1964.
116. " " "
117. AUBTW EC Mins 27 Jan 1966.
118. AUBTW EC Mins Sep 21, 1966.
119. G. Lowthian Interview & NAOP. Rept. '71 Dec 1967.  
 A. Dunne GS of the MAOE 'I believe that the National Offices of the union (ie the AUBTW) tried all they knew to bring their own EC round to a point of agreement.
120. NAOP EC Mins 16-17 Aug 1967.
121. NFBTO CC Mins Sep 22 1966.
122. George Henderson: Interview.
123. AUBTW EG Mins 3 Aug 1966.
124. L. Poupard: Interview.
125. L. Poupard. Notes on amalgamation.
126. ASP&D: Rept of Proceedings of GC Meetings 8-11 Jun 1964 & Jun 1966.
127. As Austin put it on one occasion GC Mins June 1966  
 'As things are going at the moment, I do not feel inclined to talk to the Secretary of the ASW about anything. That is my personal view, but that must not take precedence over the general desires and aspirations of the members as a whole. Personalities have to be sunk in this direction, but the behaviour of the ASW

- GS leaves a lot to be desired.'
128. Negotiations were opened at the beginning of 1966.  
ASP&D EC Mins 22-23 Feb 1966.
  129. D. Crawford: Interview & W. Austin Interview.  
ASP&D EC Mins 1962.  
Joint Meeting of EC & Scottish DC 20 Feb 1964.
  130. ASP&D Rulebk 1966
  131. ASP&D Joint Meeting of EC & Scottish DC 20 Feb 1964.
  132. ASP&D MJ Jul 1964.
  133. ASP&D Rept of proceedings of Gen. Council, June 1964.  
Comment by A. Austin.
  134. N. Willis; Interview & G. Lowthian; Interview.
  135. ASW GC Mins 24 Mar 1966: Min 566/66.
  136. Les Wood: Amalgamation Document: Suggested new structure  
to absorb other societies. c.1966.
  137. NAOP EC Mins 16-17 Aug 1967.
  138. G. Lloyd - 228,417  
A. Dunne - 184,493  
NFBTO ACP 1966. The way in which unions cast their  
votes is not recorded.
  139. L. Poupard: Notes on amalgamation.
  140. W. Martin: Interview.
  141. L. Poupard: Notes. This view was put by every person  
with whom the issue was discussed esp. Martin, ASW;  
& Lowthian, AUBTW.
  142. NAOP AR 1967.
  143. NAOP EC Mins 13-14 July 1967.
  144. G. Henderson: Interview & NAOP Rept. Dec. 1967.
  145. G. Henderson: Interview.
  146. NFBTO ACP 1968 Presidential Address.
  147. D. Crawford: Interview.
  148. L. Poupard: Interview.

149. ASF&D Rept of proceedings of 5th National Conference (1st annual policy making conference) May 1968.
150. AUBTW EC Mins 29 Apr 1968 & 31 Jul 1969.
151. N. Willis: C. Lovell. Although the CEU were affiliated to the NFBTO they were not parties to the NJCBI. It was opposition from the T&GW which kept them off.
152. W. Smart: Interview.
153. C. Lovell: "
154. IDS Brief 169 Nov 1979.
155. ETU 1965 Rulebk; PTU 1963 Rulebk.
156. C. Lovell Interview. Figs supplied by C. Lovell.
- |     | In favour | Against | Majority |
|-----|-----------|---------|----------|
| PTU | 10,699    | 4,645   | 6,054    |
| ETU | 45,452    | 42,621  | 2,831    |
157. ASW EC Mins 15-16 Dec 1965. 1494/65.
158. AST&D Rept of proceedings at the 4th Nat. Biennial Conf. 25-27 Apr 1967.
159. ASP&D Rept of proceedings at the 5th Nat Biennial Conf. (1st Annual Policy Making Conf.) May 1968.
160. ASW MJ Jan 1969.
161. ASW & ASP&D: Transfer of engagements; statement of intent.
162. ASW MJ Jan 1970 Transfer of engagements of the ASP&D Consequential alterations to the ASW's General Rules.
163. The ASP&D held its first policy making conf. in 1968.
164. The question of pensions was an important inducement for members of the EC of the Painters to accept the transfer although it was to be realised that the scheme which was operated within the ASW was not actuarially sound and new arrangements were made.
- W. Austin & D. Crawford/Former EC Painter.

165. J. England BJIR 17(1) (Mar 1979) & D. Crawford: Interview.
166. ASW (incorporating the ASP&D), Model constitution for a Regional Council and a Regional Committee.
167. D. Crawford: Interview.
168. ASP&D Rept of proceedings of 6th Nat. Conf. (2nd Annual Policy making conference), May 1969.
169. "
170. " & W. Massey (ASP&D) Corres. with Gaster, Vowles, Turner & Loeffler, solicitors, Dec. 1969.
171. According to an RIBA survey of over 3,000 private architects' offices, 94% employed 20 or less architectural staff.
172. ABT Circular to all members Oct 1969.
173. ASW Consequential alterations to the Society's General Rules effective from the date of agreement of transfer of engagements of the ABT.
174. ASP&D Rept of proceedings of 5th Nat. Conf. 1st Annual policy making conf. May 1968.
175. George Smith to George Lowthian, 5 July 1968.
176. " " It should be noted that the first contacts between these organisations had taken place rather earlier, but it is not until the summer of '68 that there is any indication that these questions are being taken seriously.
177. AUBTW EC Mins 31 Jul 1969.
178. R. Miles: Interview.
179. AUBTW Nat. Del. Conf. 1970.
180. "
181. "
182. A. Utting CP member & UCATT EC.
183. AUBTW EC Mins 10 Sep 1969.

184. None of the 3 officers, the GS George Lowthian, AG Bill Lewis & President John Leonard were in the CP, so that this would have weighted AUBTW representation heavily against the CP.
185. AUBTW EC Mins Jan 1971.
186. AUBTW Nat. Del. Conf. 1970.
187. A. Williams: Interview.
188. G. Lowthian: Interview.
189. AUBTW & ASW Transfer of engagements, 1970.
  
190. Voting papers were issued in Dec. 1970.
191. A. Utting interview.
192. These were themes of a speech by Br. Fawbert of London Div. Co. at the 1970 Conference. They were taken up by some CP'ers at grass-roots level where CPers were present esp. Barking & Dagenham br. where opposition was continued. CP members on the AUBTW EC gave priority to their representation on their merged EC.
193. S. Lynch, MA Thesis.
194. "
195. "
196. ASW AR 1960. G. Smith denied charges that he was attacking the Federation and argued that 1) The ASW was the largest single contributor to the NFBTO. The 1960 fees accounted for 6% of total ASW expenditure and 14% of trade management. 2) That the ASW made the greatest input; to the NFBTO in terms of manpower at district and branch levels & 3) that the ASW's own organisational services were so extensive that they relied, to a smaller extent than other unions, on the services of the NFBTO. It was on this basis that he argued at the NFBTO GC Meeting Sep 1960 that there

should be 'a radical reorganisation of the structure' of the Federation.'

197. eg The NFBTO ACP 1962.

198. NFBTO ACP 1964.

199. Attendance was invariably paid at the rate of 3 days & 2 nights expenses away although business was often concluded in a day. This enhanced Coppock's control over business since delegates were anxious not to stay for longer than a day and tended to accept decisions taken by him unless there were serious reasons to the contrary. Expenses were charged to the Federation.

J. Young: Interview.

200. J. Young: Interview.

201. NFBTO ACP 1964.

202. NFBTO ACP 1965. The voting on the resolution concerning regional representation was:

For the changes	Against
192,550	210,306

203. NFBTO Total membership affiliated to the NFBTO

Year	Total memb. affiliated to NFBTO	Total labour force in private contracting & public employment	Density = Number affiliated to NFBTO as % of labour force
1957	450,722	1,429,000	31.5
1965	417,910	1,491,000	28.0

Hilton, 1968. P.72.

204. NFBTO Central Council mins 14 Dec 1966.

205. NFBTO Central Council meeting mins 19 Sep 1968.

206. NFCU ACP 1970.

207. Marsden CEU. NFCU ACP 1970 Proceedings of private session.

208. J. Youngs " "

209. NFCU ACP 1971 & NFCU Central Council mins & Nov 1971 & Special meeting of central co. 15 Nov 1971.

210. Report to the Joint Committee (ASW on Transfer of engagements).
211. L. Wood indicated that pay for all officials had to be levelled up to ASW standards & this was a considerable addition to the wages bill for the new union.
212. Trowel trades discussion c.1963/4. Lowthian's plan.

- (1) Jo England BJIR 17 (1) (Mar 1979).
- (2) Supra Ch.1.
- (3) Grunfield, 1966.
- (4) NBL Aug 1936 Letter from a member of the T&GWU 'Why not one union?' deals with the theme of amalgamation without ever referring to the problems involved in creating an industrial organisation which resulted from the structure of his own union.
- (5) R. Undy, unpublished paper on mergers.
- (6) eg R. Hyman, 1975.
- (7) H.A. Clegg, 1954.
- (8) A. Bullock, 1960.
- (9) H.A. Clegg, 1954.
- (10) D. Lamb, 1974.
- (11) H. Braverman, 1974.
- (12) J. England BJIR 17 (1) (Mar 1979), R. Undy, unpublished paper.
- (13) J. Hughes, 1968.
- (14) R. Postgate, 1923.
- (15) "
- (16) H.A. Turner in McCarthy (Ed), 1972.
- (17) H.A. Turner, 1962.
- (18) J. Hughes, 1968, J.D.M. Bell - Industrial unionism: a critical analysis in McCarthy (Ed), 1972.
- (19) R. Hyman, 1975. P.41.
- (20) G.D.H. Cole World of Labour, 1913.
- (21) An exception was the NUM which claimed bricklayers and woodworkers in the pits. The NUR was less successful in eliminating building craft members from railway workshops.
- (22) A. Marsh, 1965.
- (23) H.A. Clegg, 1976.
- (24) "

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