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THE MINERS AND NATIONALISATION, 1931-36

For nearly one hundred years miners and nationalisation have been synonymous. The miners supported a nationalisation resolution at the 1892 Trades Union Congress, and in 1893 Keir Hardie presented a brief bill to the House of Commons. This abortive exercise was repeated in 1907 and 1913. The 1914-18 war marks the demise of that form of nationalisation which sought to place the mines under a Government Department. The pre-1914 industrial unrest and the experience of the war radicalised the miners' conception of nationalisation. The ideas of *The Miners' Next Step*, of the debates within the Miners' Federation of Great Britain after 1906 and of Guild Socialism permeated official MFGB thinking on nationalisation. By 1919 and the Sankey Commission the MFGB was committed to a model of nationalisation which placed considerable emphasis upon workers' control. This model had two aims: first, to emancipate the coal industry from the wasteful exploitation of the coal-owners; and second, to emancipate the miner as a worker from his bondage. The present paper seeks to answer the question: why was this model of nationalisation abandoned by the MFGB in favour of the technocratic model of nationalisation formulated by Herbert Morrison?

1919-31: The Background

In the General Election of 1918 Labour's manifesto promised: "In industry, Labour demands the immediate nationalisation and democratic control of vital public services", and this included the coal industry.¹ Faced with the demand for nationalisation, Lloyd George appointed the Sankey Commission, which reported in favour of the principle of mines national-

¹ Labour's Call to the People (1918). This and all subsequent manifesto quotes are from British General Election Manifestos 1900-1974, compiled and ed. by F. W. S. Craig (London, 1975). The quote is from p. 32.

isation, but could not agree on a scheme. The Government refused to implement the recommendation, and the attempts of the MFGB to sway public opinion were an ignominious failure. After 1918 it became clear to many in the MFGB that they as a union would be unable to secure nationalisation; thus they looked to the Labour Party to form a Government and then nationalise the mines. In 1918 the party adopted its new Constitution with Clause 4 promising nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. Naturally, the miners wholeheartedly supported the party which had a specific commitment to nationalisation. R. H. Tawney, who sat on the Sankey Commission, argued that the 1918 Constitution and the Sankey Commission's recommendation had changed nationalisation from a principle or aspiration to a policy to be achieved by a Labour Government.² At the 1922 General Election Labour proclaimed: "Our industrial policy involves the prompt Nationalisation of Mines, as recommended by the Sankey Commission, [...] with an increased share of control for the workers".³

By the mid 1920's the party was committed to nationalisation, and the miners assumed that mines nationalisation would be on the lines of Sankey. However, there were two clearly discernible attitudes to nationalisation in the trade unions and party: first, workers' control, and second, the promotion of efficiency in the public interest. *Labour and the New Social Order* (1918) and Clause 4 were ambiguous, supporting neither interpretation of nationalisation clearly. During the 1920's, as Labour came closer to Government, there was a limiting of both the scope and character of nationalisation. This was reflected in the 1923 manifesto, which made no mention of workers' control: "[The Labour Party] will apply in a practical spirit the principle of Public Ownership and Control to the Mines".⁴ When in office, Labour did little to better conditions in the industry, on the grounds of its minority Parliamentary status and consequent dependence upon the Liberals.⁵

² R. H. Tawney, *The Nationalization of the British Coal Industry* (London, 1919), a Labour Party pamphlet reprinted in *The Radical Tradition*, ed. by R. Hinden (London, 1966).

³ *Labour's Call to the People* (1922), in: *British General Election Manifestos*, op. cit., p. 40.

⁴ *Labour's Appeal to the Nation* (1923), *ibid.*, p. 49.

⁵ The 1924 manifesto, *Labour's Appeal to the People*, claimed the Liberals had prevented "The reorganisation of the whole Mining Industry [...], on the lines of National Ownership, equitable treatment for all interests concerned, security both for the taxpayer and the consumer, wages under properly-arrived at National Agreements, and participation in administration, both national and local, by the various grades and sections of those engaged in the industry". *Ibid.*, p. 62.

In 1929 Philip Snowden announced that any nationalisation would be “through a public corporation controlled [...] by the best experts and business men”.⁶ The ideas commonly associated with Herbert Morrison were therefore current in the Labour Party before the 1930’s. In the 1929 manifesto there was no mention of workers’ control, and it was made clear to the MFGB that nationalisation would only take place after the private coal industry had been rationalised and reorganised.⁷ By the beginning of the 1930’s the efficiency criterion had been elevated above that of emancipation, and the capitalist was increasingly portrayed as a managerial technocrat and public servant. This conception of nationalisation meant there would be no change in the power relations within the nationalised industries.⁸

The labour movement and nationalisation

The crucial debates on public ownership took place after the electoral debacle of 1931. The Labour Party and the TUC were determined to formulate clear and coherent policies to which a future Labour Government would be committed. This policy-making process was to provide “the core of Labour’s domestic policy for the next twenty years”.⁹ The party and TUC formed joint policy committees to formulate agreed policy statements, and one of the most contentious areas was that of the nature of nationalisation.¹⁰ Both the TUC and party accepted the public-board model of nationalisation, but the 1931 TUC at Newcastle accepted the statutory principle of direct labour representation on the boards, a principle not accepted by the party. The General Council undertook to

⁶ Quoted in D. Coates, *The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 19.

⁷ Report of a Meeting between the MFGB Executive and the Officials of the Parliamentary Labour Party, 26 March 1929, in MFGB, Executive Committee minutes, 12 April. The minutes and proceedings of the MFGB were consulted in the archive of the National Union of Mineworkers (Yorkshire Area). This also contains Labour Party conference reports and the proceedings of the annual Trades Union Congress. The author would like to thank the Area Officials for granting access.

⁸ The party manifesto of 1929, *Labour’s Appeal to the Nation*, emphasised the need for the immediate reorganisation of the industry. *British General Election Manifestos*, p. 83. See also J. Tomlinson, *The Unequal Struggle? British Socialism and the Capitalist Enterprise* (London, 1982), p. 70.

⁹ D. Howell, *British Social Democracy* (London, 1976), p. 65.

¹⁰ Labour Party National Executive Committee, Policy Committee minutes, 25 January 1932. Morrison was added to the Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee one month later, see *ibid.*, 18 February. All references to Labour Party NEC and Sub-Committee proceedings are from the Archives of the British Labour Party series published by Harvester Publications.

formulate a nationalisation scheme which would enshrine this principle.¹¹

The Economic Committee of the TUC General Council was given the responsibility of preparing proposals for the control of the putative nationalised industries. The General Council accepted the resulting report, *The Public Control and Regulation of Industry and Trade*, in preparation for the 1932 TUC and it recommended Congress accept the report.¹² The General Council's report argued that the specific details of nationalisation must be left vague, but that the basic scheme could be formulated, the basic organisational principle being that of the public board composed of experts.¹³ The controlling board would be appointed by the responsible Minister (who would, in turn, be responsible to Parliament), but "While the members may be drawn from different classes of the community [. . .], particular interests should not nominate members but should rather be represented on Advisory or Consultative Boards."¹⁴ Both party and General Council accepted a common model: a public board composed of experts without statutory workers' representation. Workers' control was a non-starter. The report was put to Congress (with a General Council recommendation to accept), but there it was subject to scathing criticism. For example, J. Cliff (Transport and General Workers' Union) rejected the report and the advisory capacity allotted to labour with the comment: "Labour is certain about what it wants. It wants power."¹⁵ C. T. Cramp replied for the General Council. He urged acceptance before the party conference met on the ground that the movement must have definite plans. Cramp was worried that direct workers' representation would not be in the unions' best interests as organisations, and he urged Congress to accept the report as a general statement of principle. This was accepted by Congress, whilst emphasising that it was not satisfied with the proposals.¹⁶ At the very outset of the joint-policy process the party-union consensus was broken by the delegates to the TUC. The task now facing party and union leaders was to formulate a policy acceptable to the membership.

As nationalisation was identified as Labour's distinctive policy, party theorising on nationalisation was of supreme importance in the debate.

¹¹ Report of the 63rd Annual Trades Union Congress, 1931, pp. 433-39. For the general background to the debate see G. N. Ostergaard, "Labour and the Development of the Public Corporation", in: *The Manchester School*, XXII (1954), pp. 192-226; R. A. Dahl, "Workers' Control and the British Labour Party", in: *American Political Science Review*, XLI (1947), pp. 875-900; and K. L. Shell, "Industrial Democracy and the British Labour Movement", in: *Political Science Quarterly*, LXXII (1957), pp. 515-39.

¹² Report of the 64th Annual Trades Union Congress, 1932, pp. 206-19.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 390.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 394-96.

Party theorising on nationalisation was dominated by Herbert Morrison. Morrison's ideas on public ownership crystallised after he became Minister of Transport in 1929. He had long been in favour of some form of public ownership, but only after a series of discussions with civil servants between July and September did he abandon municipalisation. In November 1929 the Labour Cabinet approved his public-board scheme for the reorganisation of public transport in London.¹⁷ Morrison commented later: "The formation of the L.P.T.B. provided a blueprint on which all the designs for nationalization of industries after 1945 were broadly based."¹⁸ Whilst this is true, the blueprint was not to be unchallenged. During 1932 the Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee formulated a policy on the reorganisation and public ownership of electricity and transport. At the first meeting Morrison was empowered to prepare a memorandum on these subjects.¹⁹ In an attempt to co-ordinate party and TUC policy making Hugh Dalton and Morrison were co-opted onto the Economic Committee of the TUC General Council.²⁰

The Labour Party was aware that Morrison's ideas on public ownership were disliked by a number of trade unions (notably the TGWU and the Railway Clerks), and in an attempt to avoid union hostility Morrison was asked to prepare a document outlining areas of disagreement, taking into account the attitude of the above unions.²¹ A document was then circulated to the TGWU and the Railway Clerks, and subject to amendments this report was sent to the Policy Committee for its approval.²² When the report was sent to the full National Executive Committee in June, it was accompanied by correspondence from J. Cliff of the TGWU, which amplified on their arguments in favour of greater worker participation on the public boards. After considerable discussion the reports on electricity and transport were received subject to a number of minor amendments.²³ These were then put before the annual party conference.

¹⁷ B. Donoghue and G. W. Jones, *Herbert Morrison. Portrait of a Politician* (London, 1973), p. 141.

¹⁸ *Lord Morrison of Lambeth, Herbert Morrison, An Autobiography* (London 1960), p. 119.

¹⁹ Labour Party, *Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee minutes*, 3 March 1932.

²⁰ Labour Party, *National Executive Committee minutes*, 23 March; *Policy Committee minutes*, 21 April.

²¹ *Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee minutes*, 28 April.

²² *Ibid.*, 12 May and 6 June; *Policy Committee minutes*, 16 June. For the text of the report see *Policy*, No 66 (June).

²³ *NEC minutes*, 22 June and 7 September; *Policy Committee minutes*, 21 July and 7 September.

The reports envisaged control by public boards of experts appointed by the responsible Minister. Efficiency and ability were to be the only criterion of appointment. Morrison did not exclude trade unionists from the boards, but the final test of appointment should be that of individual capacity. Anyone appointed to the board of a nationalised industry would be required to shed all previous commitments and affiliations, including trade-union appointments. Board members appointed by the unions were felt to be undesirable as they would sooner or later have to act against union interests. "Within a year the Trade Union delegate will be regarded by the rank and file as a man who has gone over to the boss-class and cannot be trusted any more."²⁴

Morrison's proposals were resisted by H. E. Clay (TGWU), who justified public ownership not only on the grounds of efficiency, but also in terms of the liberation of the individual worker. Clay pointed out the difference between Morrison, and the decision of the 1931 TUC and the reports of the Sankey and Samuel Commissions (which the TGWU saw as the best statements on public ownership) on the role of the workers.²⁵ The 1932 party conference is important as it drew the battle-lines on public ownership: between a party and TUC leadership concerned with "practical politics" and elements within the union membership with a very different conception of the workers' role in a public industry.²⁶ Howell comments: "As so often with Labour's internal controversies, a major issue became encapsulated within a superficially minor difference of opinion."²⁷ Ernest Bevin withdrew the critical TGWU amendment when Morrison accepted the proposal of a joint TUC-party approach to an agreed nationalisation scheme.²⁸

Morrison's rejection of an active role for workers in management was on the grounds of practicality. First, workers' control, or a significant degree of workers' membership on the boards, would reduce the boards' efficiency and integrity, as sooner or later such members would be forced to choose where their fundamental loyalties lay; second, Morrison wanted working-class representatives appointed as equals with other board members, not just because they were workers, as otherwise they would be at a disadvantage when dealing with expert managers; and finally, Morrison argued that

²⁴ Labour Party, Report of the 32nd Annual Conference, 1932, pp. 212-14.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-16.

²⁶ For Morrison's response see Lord Morrison of Lambeth, Herbert Morrison, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-22; Donoughue and Jones, Herbert Morrison, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-45. For Bevin and the TGWU see A. Bullock, *The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin, I: Trade Union Leader, 1881-1940* (London, 1960), pp. 510, 514.

²⁷ Howell, *British Social Democracy*, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

²⁸ Report of the 32nd Annual Conference, pp. 223-25.

the average worker was far more interested in his union and his immediate work situation, and as such workers' control could not encompass the entire enterprise. The first aim of public ownership was to better the immediate work situation and alleviate "wage slavery and industrial serfdom".²⁹ Only gradually would the role of the worker be extended into management functions: the aim of socialisation was to create a new type of worker, but the closer relationship between management and worker would not weaken the task or responsibility of management to manage.³⁰ The conflict between Morrison and the TGWU (and others) revolved around a very fine point, but the outcome would determine the final distribution of power within the enterprise, which in turn raised fundamental questions about the role of public ownership in capitalist society. A major element of worker representation would redistribute power, the TGWU argued, whereas Morrison sought to leave basic power structures unchanged. This can be seen in Morrison's belief that trade unions would retain their traditional functions under public ownership. His acceptance that unions would be responsible for wage bargaining, hours and working conditions, and that they would retain the right to strike suggests the continuation of serious and basic conflicts of interest as power relations between manager and worker were unchanged.³¹

A meeting of minds

After the party conference it was decided to postpone any further work on public ownership until after the TUC had considered the General Council's proposals. George Lansbury proposed a delay until the principles underpinning the public boards were decided. There was considerable opposition to this, and Lansbury was overruled when Morrison indicated his willingness to meet some of the trade-union criticisms. Dalton also announced that he had contacted the General Council with a view to co-ordinating work of public ownership.³² The reports of the Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee had all been approved, with the exception of the sections dealing with worker participation in the transport and electricity industries. Nothing could be done, however, until the attitude of the General Council was made clear. The co-operation was to be based on a division of labour: the Economic Committee of the TUC was to prepare a scheme for iron and steel, and the Reorganisation of Industry

²⁹ H. Morrison, *Socialisation and Transport* (London, 1933), pp. 210-12, 225-28.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 233-36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 236-39.

³² Policy Committee minutes, 20 October 1932.

Sub-Committee of the NEC was to deal with coal and power. The ultimate aim was to produce actual bills, but it was emphasised that no bill or report would be adopted without joint agreement.³³

At a meeting of the Policy Committee and the Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee the bases of the joint discussions with the TUC were established. It was agreed that the controlling body of any publicly owned industry would be a board appointed by a Government Minister. This board would be composed of persons qualified by knowledge and experience, "and would normally include representatives of Labour". There would also be joint committees of State, management and unions to deal with wages and conditions of work.³⁴ At a subsequent meeting of representatives of both the party and the TUC the position of the unions seeking an increased role on the public board was considered. During the general discussion many suggestions were made as to how the gap between the party and TUC might be bridged. It was argued that a general statement should be prepared; this was agreed and the meeting adjourned.³⁵ The General Council distributed a questionnaire to its affiliates asking for their views on public ownership and on the role of the workers in publicly owned industries. The National Executive Committee was perturbed to find "considerable division of opinion, with a majority in favour of the principle of the direct representation of Trade Unions".³⁶ The joint committee considered both a draft proposal on workers' representation, and comments from Ernest Bevin and the TGWU. Arthur Greenwood argued that "the policy contained in the document could not be accepted in every detail, and that in general the Party side adhered to the principle of the reports presented at the Leicester Conference."³⁷

The draft emphasised the criterion of appointment by ability, but it envisaged the inclusion of trade-union representatives "who by their ability and knowledge were especially suitable for these posts, but it was not proposed to give Trade Unions a statutory right to representation on these bodies."³⁸ However, it was evident from the TUC's enquiries that

³³ NEC minutes, 26 October.

³⁴ Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee minutes, 26 October; NEC minutes, 26 November. It is interesting to note that during this period a number of constituency parties expressed support for the conference and Congress refusal to accept public ownership until the question of workers' control had been explored fully. See Finance and General Purposes Committee minutes, 15 December; NEC and Parliamentary Labour Party Executive, Joint Meeting, 21 December.

³⁵ Policy Committee and Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee, Joint Meeting, 9 February 1933.

³⁶ TUC Economic Committee and Policy Committee, Joint Meeting, 20 February.

³⁷ NEC minutes, 22 February.

³⁸ TUC Economic Committee and Policy Committee, Joint Meeting, 8 March.

there was a strong desire for such statutory representation; unions “should by statute be given an adequate place on the Board [. . .] responsible for the general control and direction of each socialised industry or service.”³⁹ However, it was argued that many problems were associated with the concept of management, working conditions, adequate pay and so on, and that these were best adjusted by collective bargaining. This, and the continuance of the right to strike, meant there had to be independent trade unions enjoying a close relationship with management, but overall control must lie with expert management.⁴⁰ From this there emerged a joint draft which still had to be approved by the General Council. The TUC report on the control of nationalised industries would, if approved, be submitted to the TUC in September and the party conference in October.⁴¹ The Party and TUC were able to achieve a consensus by accepting the principle of an expert public board with provision for worker representation, but this provision was not to be guaranteed by law.

The TUC General Council announced in its report: “It has been agreed that the claim of organised labour to have its place in the control and direction of publicly-owned industries is accepted.”⁴² Nevertheless, it is clear that the position was not as unambiguous as this suggests. *The Public Control and Regulation of Industry and Trade* was a product of joint TUC-party discussions, which agreed that no one would be appointed simply because they represented an interest. This did not mean there was any intention to exclude members of the working class, but it did mean the working class would not be given a statutory right to representation. The report noted the strong sentiments in favour of such representation, but it argued a distinction had to be drawn between management and control. Management had to be expert and efficient, and nothing would prevent the unions as the representatives of the working class from making suggestions on the composition of the board; but the continuance of traditional union functions meant that unions could not have a dominant role in control, though they had a claim for a share in control and direction. This claim was accepted.⁴³

The General Council asked Congress to accept these recommendations. However, Charles Dukes (National Union of General and Municipal Workers) responded by moving a resolution claiming fifty-percent working-class membership on any board and the recognition of full trade-union

³⁹ Draft Report, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ NEC minutes, 22 March. See Appendix for the draft report.

⁴² Report of the 65th Annual Trades Union Congress, 1933, p. 84.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

rights. Dukes demanded a clear definition of representation and the notion of expertise; surely, he argued, the best experts were those who worked in the industry?⁴⁴ In reply, Walter Citrine, the TUC General Secretary, warned the delegates that their decision had to be seen in relation to the Labour Party. A TUC decision

did not mean that the Labour Party was compelled automatically to accept their instructions, but the carrying out of any policy on this matter ultimately must become a political matter. It required legislation, and therefore they had to consider the political aspect of it.⁴⁵

Citrine argued that the General Council had been persuaded by the party's case and dropped the statutory principle on pragmatic grounds.

They must remember that they had no earthly chance of any other Government carrying this out; nothing but a Labour Government would carry it out. Consequently, they had to condition their thinking by the reflection that it was the Labour Party that would have this job to do.⁴⁶

The General Council were opposed to any firm percentage of representation, and delegates were warned that "syndicalism" might damage the party's electoral prospects. Congress was urged to accept the report on pragmatic grounds: "Would it help the task of getting an electoral majority [...]?"⁴⁷ Congress accepted Citrine's advice and rejected the reference-back of the report by 1,428,000 to 1,045,000, a majority of 383,000.

The report of the NEC made much of the TUC's approval of the joint memorandum, and it emphasised the compromise on workers' representation: "This claim of organised labour that it shall have its place in the control and direction of publicly-owned industries is accepted."⁴⁸ The NEC recommended the adoption of the memorandum as a statement of basic principle on public ownership; the substance of this principle would have to be decided on the merits of each case. During the debate George Lathan for the NEC emphasised the minute differences between the protagonists. "It was only when efforts were made to define the methods by which reserves of labour experience, or qualifications, could be drawn up that differences developed."⁴⁹ Lathan urged that for the good of the movement the report should be accepted.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Labour Party, Report of the 33rd Annual Conference, 1933, p. 14.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

In response Charles Dukes moved a resolution on behalf of the NUGMW bitterly critical of the memorandum, demanding statutory worker representation. The substance of the resolution argued that socialisation “is not merely to be a change of ownership”.

Socialism means more to the wage-earner than the knowledge of an efficiently run industry in which his interest begins and ends with the acceptance of his wage packet. It means status. We want status as well as remuneration. We want to apply our brains, we want to give all our knowledge, we want to help in the creation of efficiency.⁵⁰

A. G. Walkden of the Railway Clerks urged the rejection of the NUGMW resolution “so as to maintain harmony and solidarity”, arguing that the compromise allowed for the appointment of workers to the boards. Similarly, if the specific details were left open this would help those who would be responsible for implementing actual public-ownership schemes.⁵¹ Bevin, who was intimately involved in forming the compromise, urged the constituency parties (who had been vociferous in their support for the NUGMW resolution) to keep out as this “is primarily a Trade Union problem”, and he was opposed to too strict a commitment on worker representation, “I would rather leave it fluid.”⁵² Nevertheless, conference approved the NUGMW resolution by 1,223,000 to 1,083,000, a majority of 140,000. This did not mean the reference-back of the memorandum, but adding the NUGMW resolution as an addendum.

After the conference season the trade unions were officially, albeit narrowly, in favour of the proposals set out in the joint report, whereas the Labour Party had been committed to statutory workers’ representation, again by a small majority. These small majorities were of great political importance, as the General Council and the NEC were able to continue their attempts to reach a mutually acceptable compromise on workers’ representation. In effect, the 1933 party-conference decision was ignored. After the conferences the NEC decided to continue to consult with the unions to achieve a joint scheme.⁵³ After this workers’ control was not considered by any party policy committee during 1933-34.

The TUC spent far more time attempting to clarify the functions of labour under public ownership. The TUC demanded that unions must be involved in two critical areas: first, the general conduct of the industry, and second, in the field of collective bargaining. Unions should also be con-

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 205-07.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 208-09.

⁵³ Donoghue and Jones, Herbert Morrison, pp. 184-87; Howell, *British Social Democracy*, p. 68; NEC minutes, 25 October (Appendix).

sulted on all appointments, but management had to be based on expertise, and the relationship between management and worker should be based on "the spirit of the sports field". Even though the unions would retain their functions, a new spirit should evolve in collective bargaining.⁵⁴ Dukes again moved a resolution at Congress suggesting that fifty per cent of the management boards should be made up of worker representatives. Dukes argued that the resolution was needed so as to bring the TUC into line with the Labour Party.⁵⁵ Citrine was not opposed to the resolution, as the TUC could not be committed to any definite figure or percentage under the joint agreement. Any damage could be rectified during the subsequent consultations leading to a joint scheme. There had to be a unified policy, and this would be made, not by either Congress or conference, but by negotiations between the NEC and the General Council. Citrine was adamant that a joint policy would be presented to the next TUC.⁵⁶ The resolution was passed unanimously.

At the party conference an attempt to resolve the problem of worker representation was blocked by Dukes on the grounds that a common scheme was to be considered at the 1935 conference. The NEC agreed to suspend the debate.⁵⁷ In October the NEC met to consider matters not settled at the conference. On workers' control it decided to consult with the TUC, and on the nationalisation of the mines it was decided to hold a joint TUC-party enquiry.⁵⁸

At the first meeting of the General Council and NEC a number of common bases of agreement were reached. With regard to workers' representation it was noted that a memorandum seeking statutory representation had been presented to the TUC in 1933 and had been defeated, but had been accepted by the party conference. During a lengthy discussion it was argued that the TUC resolution of 1933 covered two separate points: first, that of trade-union participation in the control of publicly owned industry, summed up in the joint statement of 1933; and second, the functional control of industry, which should be considered separately. The basic question was, it was argued: should the 1933 statement be modified? *In attempting to answer this question it was decided to adjourn for one month, and the unions involved were to be asked for their views. It was emphasised that the 1933 party-conference decision had been carried by a small majority and that under the 1934 TUC decision the*

⁵⁴ Report of the 66th Annual Trades Union Congress, 1934, pp. 204-05.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 371.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 373.

⁵⁷ Labour Party, Report of the 34th Annual Conference, 1934, pp. 183-84.

⁵⁸ NEC minutes, 24 October 1934; Policy Committee minutes, 6 November.

General Council had only been committed to giving further consideration to the role of workers in the nationalised industries.⁵⁹ It is at this point that the general work on public ownership involves the nationalisation of the mines.

The response of the MFGB

The MFGB was on the periphery of the internal debate over the nature of public ownership between 1932 and 1935. The MFGB felt it had no reason to be worried by this lack of participation: the party had accepted coal nationalisation as a central element in party policy, and the Sankey and Samuel Commissions had allowed the MFGB, the party and the TUC to formulate their ideas. However, all that had been decided since 1918 was the general acceptance of the principle of nationalisation, not the substance.

At the 1932 party conference J. McGurk of the MFGB moved a comprehensive resolution seeking the nationalisation of the mines under a central authority with such “[an] authority to include working-class representatives appointed by the Trades Unions covering the industry”.⁶⁰ Conference supported the MFGB resolution, but C. T. Cramp (National Union of Railwaymen) enquired of the MFGB that, as the principle of nationalisation was accepted, would the MFGB agree to work with the party and TUC to formulate an agreed scheme? Ebby Edwards, the Secretary of the MFGB, consented, but only “on the understanding that the principle [of nationalisation] was agreed to”.⁶¹ As a result of this decision the MFGB leaders virtually agreed to accept the scheme of nationalisation which would emerge from the joint TUC-party negotiations, negotiations in which the MFGB would play a subsidiary role. This suggests that, in the final analysis, the actual form of nationalisation was of secondary importance to the MFGB. As part of this process Edwards was asked to attend the meetings of the party’s reorganisation sub-committee in a private capacity. The Executive of the MFGB agreed to give the party the maximum of co-operation.⁶²

⁵⁹ TUC General Council and NEC, Joint Meeting, 15 January 1935; and Policy, No 273 (January).

⁶⁰ Report of the 32nd Annual Conference, p. 264.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁶² MFGB, Executive Committee minutes, 11 May 1933. In December 1932 Arthur Jenkins and Ebby Edwards were co-opted on to the Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee. See Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee minutes, 16 December. I have found no subsequent reference to either attending any committee meeting, and the coal industry seems not to have been specifically considered by the party between 1932 and 1935.

The most important MFGB statement on public ownership during this period was made in 1933 and was a response to the 1932 General Council report. The main controversy had been over the composition of the controlling board, and the MFGB felt this was of vital importance. The MFGB argued that a massive restructuring of the coal industry was inevitable, “the day of free enterprise in our big industries is over, the day of regulated and planned industry has begun”, and inevitably this meant public ownership.⁶³ Public ownership could only be brought about by a Labour Government, as such it would mark the beginning of a socialist society, but

The great battle of the future [. . .] is likely to centre around the question of “control”. Who shall “control”? Shall the workers have some say in the future conduct of industry or shall we still have a governing class comprised very largely of the persons who govern industry to-day?⁶⁴

Without giving the worker some control and responsibility the miners believed they would not get the type of socialism they desired. Despite the powerful sentiments in favour of workers’ control the crucial phrase is: “Shall the workers have *some* say?”,⁶⁵ the definition and quantification of “some” is of vital importance. The MFGB argued that not to change the management structure would have the effect of perpetuating old patterns of control and attitudes to authority; to avoid this workers had to be involved in management. In a letter to the General Council, Edwards had stated clearly that MFGB policy remained that enshrined in the MFGB evidence to the Samuel Commission. This had been formulated by a joint committee of the MFGB, General Council, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the Labour Party Executive.⁶⁶ Significantly, the MFGB had not considered nationalisation policy since 1925-26, and the MFGB Executive conceded that the joint policy might have to be amended to take account of changes in circumstances.

The MFGB were willing to concede that the management of a publicly owned coal industry would have to be expert because of the safety factor, and the miners were very concerned that such an industry would be “entirely free from the influence of particular interests” to avoid a possible resurgence of coal-owner influence. It was desirable that “the only persons competent to undertake control and direction are those persons who have

⁶³ MFGB, Report of the Executive Committee, 1933, p. 26.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

⁶⁵ My emphasis.

⁶⁶ Edwards to Citrine, 22 December 1932, reproduced *ibid.*, pp. 27-28. The joint policy is set out in *Coal and Commonsense* (London, 1926). See also Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, 1925, Vol. I: Report [Cmd 2600], pp. 63-73, for a discussion of these proposals.

acquired the necessary experience".⁶⁷ Management would naturally have to be expert (because of safety), but the MFGB and the miners should be involved in decision making at all levels. The MFGB argued prophetically that if the miners were divorced from managerial authority "then inevitably there must grow up again all the old antagonisms between management and labour [. . .] a state of affairs which should be avoided at all costs."⁶⁸ The MFGB was acutely conscious of the importance of efficiency and expertise, but did not regard trade-union or worker participation as prejudicial to either criterion.

The complacency of the miners over public ownership can be seen from the MFGB conference debates. A resolution was moved by Durham at the 1934 MFGB conference calling for nationalisation *via* a Labour Government. J. Parker, who moved the resolution, admitted that nationalisation resolutions were frequent at MFGB conferences, and he agreed that mines nationalisation was one of the Federation's basic principles. However, his complaint was that nothing was ever done to implement these resolutions and, moreover, the MFGB had "been concerned more with rationalisation than nationalisation. We have been seeking, under the present system of ownership and control, to effect a more logical and more economic organisation of the industry."⁶⁹ For the MFGB and a Labour Government to work to make the private coal industry more efficient and therefore more profitable (as with the 1930 Coal Mines Act) was to benefit only the coal-owners. From the miners' point of view rationalisation would do little to better their position in the industry, and nationalisation was not simply concerned with creating a more efficient industry, but with improving the miners' status. Thus, compensation for silicosis and shorter working hours were contingent upon nationalisation, concessions which could not be achieved through rationalisation. So Parker urged the Federation to finance a campaign of propaganda in the country to persuade the public on the benefits of nationalisation and begin work on "providing a definite scheme for nationalisation", and not to rely on the schemes formulated years previously. Circumstances had changed and a new scheme was needed.⁷⁰ This resolution was seconded by S. O. Davies (South Wales), and then there was an embarrassing gap as no further delegates wished to speak in the debate. The debate then faded away, but the point is that the delegates believed they had nothing to say on nationalisation.

⁶⁷ Edwards to Citrine, loc. cit., p. 27.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶⁹ MFGB, Annual Conference, 1934, pp. 72-73.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

At the TUC of 1934 Joseph Jones of the MFGB moved a long and complex resolution criticising the inefficiency of the coal industry under private ownership. Jones went to great lengths to emphasise that the miners were not “Luddites”, and that they would welcome an efficient and productive coal industry. Both the speeches by Jones and that by Will Lawther seconding the resolution were bitterly critical of the waste and inefficiency of the coal industry, arguing that this would only be remedied when the industry was taken into public ownership. This resolution was passed unanimously.⁷¹ The speeches were overwhelmingly concerned with the efficiency of the industry, which was so necessary to providing a secure base for a prosperous economy. The emphasis of the miners’ leaders on the efficiency and rationalisation of the coal industry in the *national*, and not solely in the miners’, interest suggests a predisposition to accept the party’s emphasis of community interest and technocratic ability, and hence a subordinate role for the mineworker in the management of the industry.

The immediate result of the TUC resolution was a joint meeting between the General Council and the NEC to draw up a broad scheme, and agree on the principles underpinning such a scheme. This would be submitted initially to the General Council for its approval.⁷² It was taken up by the MFGB at its annual conference in 1935 when Durham moved a resolution broadly similar to resolution 16 at the 1934 conference. The main difference was the request that the party prepare a nationalisation bill at the earliest opportunity.⁷³ J. Swan (Durham) urged the MFGB, General Council and party to engage in a constant propaganda campaign on nationalisation aimed at converting public opinion. Swan said nothing specific on the question of control, but his views can be seen from his assertion:

we want to take charge and control of our own destiny. One of the only ways to lift us out of the morass we are in is for the nation to take control of the mines in the interests, not only of the miners, but the nation as a whole. [. . .] We believe in nationalisation for the benefit of the miners and for the benefit of the community. [. . .] We want to own the machine, then we shall end depression, destitution and labour, and the miners will take their legitimate place in the progress of the world and civilisation.⁷⁴

The resolution was seconded by Joe Hall (Yorkshire), who felt that since 1926 nationalisation had been relegated to the background. Hall sought a cast-iron commitment from the party.

⁷¹ Report of the 66th Annual Trades Union Congress, pp. 381-85.

⁷² TUC General Council and NEC, Joint Meeting, 15 January 1935.

⁷³ MFGB, Annual Conference, 1935, p. 6.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.

We say to the Parliamentary Labour Party that [nationalisation] is the first object [. . .]. The Parliamentary Labour Party should be told quite definitely their first object is not a matter of an increase in wages for the miners, but, if they got in power, to bring in legislation whereby, once and for all, we are got out of the clutches of the Coal Capitalists.⁷⁵

After the Federation's experience with the 1930 Coal Mines Act the union was vehemently opposed to any policy of rationalisation, as rationalisation would not materially affect the miners' subordinate position in a privately owned coal industry. It was assumed that public ownership would inevitably mean the transformation of the power structure in the industry. The resolution was, as usual, passed unanimously.

The General Council of the TUC presented an interim report on the coal industry to the 1935 Congress. The Economic Committee of the General Council and the party's Reorganisation of Industry Sub-Committee had jointly considered the industry, but drafting the report had been the TUC's responsibility. Basic organisation was to be the public board, and in the operation of the industry "provision would be made for the mineworkers, through their organisations [. . .], to share in the formulation of the policy of the industry, and to take over an increasing measure of responsibility for the determination of working conditions. The day-to-day management would be in the hands of trained persons who would be appointed for their ability and professional knowledge in this field."⁷⁶ Quite simply this meant an enhanced trade-union role for the MFGB, but effective power was to remain in the hands of expert, professional managers.

Similar sentiments were expressed on a broader canvass by the Labour Party. On the general question of the role of the workers in industry the NEC announced a joint party-TUC concordat. During 1934-35 two joint meetings were held. The only real point at issue was

whether the right of the workers' organisations to be represented on the Governing Boards of socialised industries and services should or should not be secured by Statute. It was finally agreed that this right should be secured by Statute, and this recommendation has been adopted both by the General Council and by the National Executive Committee of the Party.⁷⁷

Soon after the approval of the interim scheme for the coal industry by the General Council, the TUC informed the MFGB Executive that the scheme would be available for its inspection.⁷⁸ This demonstrates that the MFGB were not at all closely involved in the formulation of this scheme, being

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁷⁶ Report of the 67th Annual Trades Union Congress, 1935, p. 209.

⁷⁷ Labour Party, Report of the 35th Annual Conference, 1935, p. 18.

⁷⁸ MFGB, Executive Committee minutes, 15 May 1936.

willing to leave the details to the TUC. Later in the month the TUC's draft report was considered by the MFGB Executive and it was agreed to accept the report in full.⁷⁹ With this acceptance the MFGB committed itself to the Morrisonian public board.

The scheme proposed by the TUC enjoyed the support of the NEC and it embodied all the essential characteristics of nationalisation as preached by Morrison. The General Council's report was, however, clear on the principle of worker representation on the board. This was balanced by the fact that appointment to a board depended on competence and anyone appointed would be required to relinquish all previous appointments, including those in trade unions.⁸⁰ It was expected that unions would retain the same functions they performed under private ownership and that these functions would be expanded, but new responsibilities would be placed on them. Unions would have major functions, but they would not be allowed to disrupt the industry.

there must be those who are vested with the necessary authority to secure the carrying out of what is required for the successful conduct of the industry [. . .]. A healthy discipline of workshop self-government must be developed [. . .]. This is fundamental to successful organisation in a socialised industry.⁸¹

Collective bargaining would continue between management and trade unions, but the profit motive would no longer predominate, there would be no exploitation, and a new co-operative system of industrial relations would emerge.

In the debate on the General Council report there was little concern expressed over the details of the proposed scheme. David Grenfell, an MFGB-sponsored MP, was fulsome in his praise: "The miners are deeply appreciative of this final stage in what has been a very long process of agitation".⁸² Grenfell argued that at last the movement had a practical scheme for nationalisation. Nevertheless, there was some ambiguity in Grenfell's speech on control after nationalisation.

we want to acquire control, and we request [. . .] that any measure of legislation that is introduced into Parliament [. . .] will contain provision for the democratic control of the mining industry. Let the men themselves have a larger say in determining the conditions of their employment, and in determining the measure of their reward.⁸³

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 May.

⁸⁰ Report of the 68th Annual Trades Union Congress, 1936, p. 210.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 419.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 422.

This could be interpreted as referring to a degree of managerial control or simply a greater degree of officially recognised collective bargaining, a guaranteed role for the MFGB in the nationalised coal industry. Similarly, Grenfell argued that nationalisation would liberate the miner as a worker.

We want to acquire the mines, and we want to acquire control of the industry. [The Miners] are being treated as if they had no rights, as if they are merely to be bought and sold almost as in feudal times. We want the intelligence of the miner to be rewarded.⁸⁴

Again the ambiguity of the MFGB's position is clear; nevertheless, the resolution was passed unanimously. So by 1936 the labour movement had a joint policy on coal nationalisation, a policy which was to be the basis of nationalisation in 1946-47.⁸⁵

The aftermath to 1936

With the adoption of *Coal: The Labour Plan* in 1936 the debate again subsided and the MFGB did not consider nationalisation again until 1938. In April 1938 the Scottish district executive urged the MFGB to sponsor a propaganda campaign on nationalisation. The MFGB Executive suggested Scotland might care to frame their request as a resolution for annual conference.⁸⁶ The result was a composite resolution calling on the TUC and Labour Party to inaugurate a nationalisation campaign. Joe Hall (Yorkshire) expressed his worry that mines nationalisation was once again fading from the eyes of the movement, and "there seems to have been no step put forward to apply the principles in the past."⁸⁷ W. Foster (Lancashire) took a different tack: if the party and the TUC were converted to the principle of mines nationalisation, what was to be the miners' next step? Propaganda? Foster declared: "I am not prepared to wait until that day, until we succeed in converting the electorate in this country to agree with us on this principle of the nationalisation of the mines." Foster advocated continuous pressure from the TUC and the party, and pointed to the effect of the MFGB's strike ballot on the outcome of the 1935-36 wage claim, and he advocated the use of industrial action on the grounds that the miners

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ The joint policy on the coal industry was published under the title *Coal: The Labour Plan* (London, 1936). See also Labour Party, Report of the 36th Annual Conference, 1936, p. 43. A bill for the nationalisation of mines and minerals (the first since 1924) was presented to Parliament in February 1937. It was defeated by 182 votes to 125. See *The Times*, 13 February 1937.

⁸⁶ MFGB, Executive Committee minutes, 14 April 1938.

⁸⁷ MFGB, Annual Conference, 1938, p. 43.

could not, and need not, wait for a Labour Government.⁸⁸ This was opposed by J. Williams (South Wales): "I think it is a political problem and one certainly for the political platform. This Federation must use the whole of the political forces in order to defeat [the] National Government and put in a Labour Government to implement this problem [sic]."⁸⁹ The resolution was passed and was put to the National Council of Labour.

In April 1939 the MFGB Executive received a letter from the NCL on the above resolution. Charles Dukes (NUGMW), George Lathan (NEC) and the Secretary of the NCL wished to form a sub-committee with the MFGB and Parliamentary Labour Party to re-draft the existing mines-nationalisation bill and present it to the NCL for approval. The MFGB agreed, appointing Will Lawther (acting MFGB President) and Oliver Harris (South Wales) as the MFGB representatives.⁹⁰ The NCL was tardy, and in July the MFGB urged the NCL to speed up its work.⁹¹ The outbreak of war in September 1939 led to a demand from Yorkshire that the MFGB "take the necessary steps" (unspecified) to secure the nationalisation of the mines. This request was received and promptly sat upon by the Executive and NCL.⁹²

The question of nationalisation was raised at the Ayr conference of the MFGB in July 1941. This resolution was moved by Lancashire and Scotland, and began by expressing regret at the inaction of the TUC and the party in attempting to implement previous nationalisation resolutions "with effective workers' control". The resolution instructed the NEC to approach immediately the Coalition Government on nationalising the mines.⁹³ The resolution was bitterly critical of the inefficiency of the private coal-owners, but the call for effective workers' control seems anachronistic, a reversion to older aims under the pressure of total war, whereas for the MFGB leadership the crucial task was preventing the loss of the union's wartime gains, as happened after 1918, in the post-war period.

This resolution was remitted to the MFGB Executive's Reorganisation Sub-Committee. In its report the Reorganisation Sub-Committee re-

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁹⁰ MFGB, Executive Committee minutes, 12 April 1939. The NCL was created in 1934. It was formerly the National Joint Council established in 1922 and it became important after 1931 as a means of promoting harmony between the TUC and Labour Party policy processes.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 23 July. There was an uncontroversial nationalisation debate at the 1939 MFGB conference, see Annual Conference, 1939, pp. 183-86.

⁹² MFGB, Executive Committee minutes, 14 September.

⁹³ MFGB, Executive Committee minutes, 8 August and 11 September 1941 (Report of the Reorganisation Sub-Committee).

commended working *via* the NCL to persuade the Government to accept and implement the 1936 plan.⁹⁴ It is clear that the wider labour movement was unwilling to devote its energies to wartime nationalisation even with a strong Labour presence in the Cabinet (a tacit acceptance of the Conservative dominance in the Coalition), and after “very lengthy deliberations” the MFGB agreed to consider not only the question of nationalisation, but all other possibilities “to meet the immediate difficulties of the industry”.⁹⁵ The criterion for pursuing wartime nationalisation demanded by the NCL was “to show how Nationalisation would beneficially assist the war effort by increasing production”.⁹⁶ Clearly, this criterion could be met by measures other than nationalisation, and the MFGB’s proposals were put forward in the “Edwards Memorandum” of November 1941.⁹⁷ The MFGB noted Bevin’s speech in the House of Commons, where he stated that if it could be proved that Labour’s 1936 policy would increase coal production “such a plan would not be precluded by the Government”.⁹⁸ The final report of the Joint Sub-Committee of the NCL advocated not mines nationalisation, but a massive State-sponsored acquisition and reorganisation of the mines. The industry would be controlled by a national board composed of representatives of the Government, the MFGB and the Mining Association (the coal-owners’ organisation).⁹⁹

When confronted by the coal crisis of 1942, the Government was forced to take urgent action to reorganise the coal industry. The Government was primarily concerned with production, and its policies were oriented around this principle. The Cabinet (and the Conservative Party and backbench) refused to sanction State requisition despite the urgings of Dalton and Bevin, and the result was a compromise – Government control, an advisory National Coal Board, the creation of a Ministry of Fuel and Power, and a national conciliation scheme.¹⁰⁰ The exigencies of wartime production made nationalisation unlikely, and all hopes of wartime national-

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 17 October.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 November.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19 December, and 20 November for the “Edwards Memorandum”.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 8 January 1942. In Appendix I, DS Circular 46/41 of 30 December 1941, Edwards asks all MFGB districts for information on “How does private ownership of the mining industry in your district retard the production of coal as part of the war effort? How would public ownership improve coal production [. . .]?” Appendix II gives Bevin’s speech of 4 December 1941, and Appendix III gives the memorandum by Morgan Phillips, the Secretary of the NCL, on mines nationalisation.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ MFGB, Executive Committee minutes, 12 March.

¹⁰⁰ Coal [Cmd 6363] (1942).

isation were crushed by Churchill's speech in the House of Commons on the 12th of October 1943.

By 1945 two facts were clear: first, that the coal industry would be nationalised by a victorious Labour Government, and second, that the model (also approved by the TUC) would be that of the Morrisonian public board. The Labour Cabinet was committed to coal nationalisation, but it was unwilling to accept a statutory obligation to consult interested parties on appointments to the proposed National Coal Board. This was a significant departure from the terms of the TUC's *Interim Report on Post-War Reconstruction* of 1944.¹⁰¹ The TUC Fuel and Power Advisory Committee had assumed that two members of the NCB would be appointed on the basis of their links with the unions. In addition, the original nationalisation bill contained no statutory provision for the NCB to consult with the trade unions in the industry.¹⁰² The Cabinet appointed Citrine and Edwards to the NCB, but both had to renounce their links with the trade-union movement.

Conclusions

With nationalisation the miners realised a long-held ambition and they did feel a great debt of gratitude to the Labour Party and Government. Nevertheless, nationalisation of the mines did not meet the expectations or aspirations of many miners, for the technocratic model of nationalisation adopted by the party could not give the miners any meaningful degree of control. The MFGB abandoned a workers'-control model of nationalisation for four reasons.

First, on the grounds of pragmatism. Mines nationalisation would only be passed by a majority Labour Government. The Labour Party had, since its founding, been deeply suspicious of "syndicalism" and a similar doctrines, preferring to advocate the primacy of a national or community interest as opposed to a class interest. The Morrisonian model of nationalisation emphasized the public interest, and this was the model which most closely fitted with the philosophy of the Labour Party. As the party had a strongly preferred model, it can be concluded that the MFGB would be unable, and indeed unwilling, to attempt to persuade the party to support, or the Cabinet to legislate for, a far more radical scheme of nationalisation at so late a date. If the miners had sought to challenge party

¹⁰¹ TUC, *Interim Report on Post-War Reconstruction* (London, 1944), paragraphs 82-84, 90-104.

¹⁰² N. Chester, *The Nationalisation of British Industry 1945-51* (London, 1975), p. 469, and R. P. Arnot, *The Miners: One Union, One Industry* (London, 1979), pp. 175-79.

orthodoxy in this matter, the result would have been delay in nationalising the mines, and the miners were not prepared to wait.

Second, the Morrisonian model of nationalisation placed a premium on efficiency. There was a strong efficiency criterion in official MFGB pronouncements on nationalisation, and this criterion was far more prominent than workers' control, which remained a comparatively ill-defined aspiration. A major reason for nationalisation was the inefficiency of private ownership, this inefficiency was used by the MFGB as a stick to beat the owners. Consequently, a nationalised coal industry had to be efficient and productive so as to avoid the same charges that were made against private ownership. The union was conscious, therefore, of the need to make nationalisation a success at virtually any cost to avoid a "told you so" response from the ex-coal-owners and the Conservative Party. Radical schemes for workers' control were seen as jeopardising the future prospects of a nationalised coal industry, whereas the Morrisonian public board with its emphasis upon technocratic expertise offered, it seemed, the best hope for a successful industry.

Third, despite its currency and popularity in both the trade unions and the party the workers'-control model was never clearly formulated; it meant little more than "direct labour representation on the controlling agencies of the nationalized industries".¹⁰³ Union leaders accepted that there would be inevitable conflicts of interest between the general community interest as represented by the board and the interests of the workers. Their whole experience as trade unionists convinced them of the necessity and desirability of a distinct management structure and a distinct, autonomous union side for collective-bargaining purposes. Morrison's model of the public corporation assumed the continuation of conflict of interest, though it was axiomatic for miners' leaders that nationalisation would mean the recognition of the miners' just demands and the legitimacy of trade-union participation would be enshrined in joint management-union bargaining and conciliation procedures, which would obviate the need for industrial action and would lead to the emergence of a co-operative system of industrial relations.

Finally, Morrison's model of the public corporation was the only model of public ownership actually functioning and the LPTB had been a success. This success and the desire of the unions to distance themselves from the day-to-day management of the nationalised industries made it difficult to argue for any alternative scheme. Morrison himself had no specific nationalisation responsibilities in the 1945-51 Labour Government, but he

¹⁰³ Tomlinson, *The Unequal Struggle?*, op. cit., p. 70.

was, as Lord President of the Council, responsible for co-ordinating the nationalisation programme. Thus, as Labour's acknowledged expert on public ownership, he enjoyed considerable influence.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Donoghue and Jones, *Herbert Morrison*, pp. 355-56. Although critical of Morrison, Emmanuel Shinwell valued his advice when, as Minister of Fuel and Power, he found there was no ready-made plan for the nationalisation of the coal industry. E. Shinwell, *Conflict Without Malice* (London, 1955), pp. 172-73.