

LABOUR AND THE MEDIA IN BRITAIN 1929 - 1939.

A STUDY OF THE ATTITUDES OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT
TOWARDS THE NEW MEDIA, FILM AND RADIO, AND OF
ITS ATTEMPTS TO USE THEM FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES.

Trevor Ryan

VOLUME TWO

Submitted to the University of Leeds in fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy.

School of History, March 1986.

Chapter Seven: LEFT WING FILM AGENCIES 1933 - 1939 (II)

1. The Workers' Film and Photo League

The activities of the Workers' Film and Photo League spanned roughly four years from November 1934 until the end of 1938, although it did not close down until July 1939. During this period it produced at least 27 films, all silent, and shot footage for many more. After 1935 it provided its own distribution service, hiring its films principally to local Labour and campaign organisations. It reportedly attracted as affiliated members thirty such groups; and assisted in the work of several local production units in various parts of the country. As an organisation it was badly run, its finances chaotic, and its membership riven with divided loyalties and differing political perspectives. Its organisational reach was far more restricted than Kino's, and its political status vis-à-vis the Labour movement as a whole was more tenuous. Nevertheless, the League was the most prolific of production agencies operating within the constellation of Labour organisations in the 1930's, and appears to have been the most dynamic in attempting to make workers 'film conscious'. This Chapter will follow the pattern of the previous one, discussing firstly the League's approach to film as a means of contributing to the 'class struggle'; secondly its distribution and exhibition work; and lastly, its productions. A representative sample of the League's films will be described; and details of the specific context of production are provided for some of these.

(1) 'Cine is the machine-gun of ideological warfare.' (1)

As with Kino the League throughout its existence conceptualised film in terms of its utility in promoting the class struggle. More specifically, its members, several of whom were also involved in Kino's work at various times, considered that the medium was a valuable

1. H.Marshall, HMC, FPL Publicity Leaflet, 'Left Film Front', n.d.

weapon in combatting the propaganda of the 'ruling class', and in raising and guiding the class consciousness of the working class. As the League explained in its Manifesto, issued shortly after forming:

up to now the making of films in this country has been almost entirely monopolised by the capitalist class. What have they done with this monopoly? They have used it to give us a capitalist view of life: to show us life from a distorted angle. They have used it to glorify and justify their own parasite existence. Above all, they have used it to make us forget our own lives.

Obviously, most people go to films to be entertained or to learn something. But there is nothing entertaining or instructive in the empty, hysterical love affairs of decadent Society women and their gangster or gigolo lovers - the subject of most commercial films.

We have only to compare any of the great Russian films like Potemkin or General Line with any English or American commercial film to prove that there is more real heroism and real drama in the daily lives of our class - in the class which is making history - than in anything the capitalist class can show us.

Workers' Film and Photo League thinks the time has come for workers to produce films and photos of their own. Films and photos showing their own efforts, their own problems, their own organised efforts to solve these problems.

For this purpose there must be joint coordinated activity by all working class film and camera club organisations, all individual workers, students, artists, writers and technicians interested in films and photography.

Workers' Film and Photo League exists to provide this co-ordination. (2)

The most immediate task was to make films and provide classes on film as the most direct way of cultivating a general awareness within the Labour movement and the working class of the medium's value in political and educational work. To this end various production units operating under League auspices produced fifteen films between November 1934 and January 1936, that is, an average of one film every month; and an arrangement was negotiated with Kino for their distribution and exhibition.

2. British Film Institute, FPL (2), Manifesto of the Workers' Film and Photo League, n.d., ?December 1934.

Thereafter production was more intermittent, with seventeen films being made within three years, almost all in 1937. As Kino no longer automatically took FPL films greater efforts were made by members towards building a League network for distribution.

While primary emphasis was given to production, the League never lost sight of the importance of class work, and over the years organised a considerable number of lectures, classes, demonstrations, weekend schools and exhibitions specifically to cultivate interest in the use of films and photographs by the Labour movement and organisations of the working class, and to provide technical instruction and general education in the possibilities of these media. A one-day school on 'film-making', for example, was given on 7 July 1935 at the Studio Theatre in Finchley, at which Ivor Montagu gave a lecture on 'Films and Modern Society' and Paul Rotha talked on 'Making films without money'. A series of lectures in mid-1937 included 'Making a Film' by Arthur Elton, 'Left Books and the League' by John Lewis of the LBC, and 'Modern Russian Technique' by Herbert Marshall. The programme for a four-day FPL school in January 1938 indicates the comprehensive approach of the League to film education. Talks on the theme of 'Film Consciousness' included 'The critical approach to the commercial cinema', and 'The Socialist Alternative'; and on the theme of 'Techniques of Propaganda', talks such as 'Mass Observation with the Camera' and 'The Psychological Angle'. Other themes focussed on practical work - script-writing, filming, editing, exhibition, sound recording and the use of film slides.(3) Most of these classes, and most of the exhibitions which the League itself arranged, were in London; but some were given where affiliated provincial groups existed. Manchester Film and Photo League gave regular, fortnightly shows for purposes of 'technical discussion'.(4) Photographic exhibitions occasionally toured the country, as did a library of League films in 1935-6; and attempts were made to establish a photographic library for use by the left press, both as a focus for generating interest in 'worker photography' and to supply suitable papers and journals with appropriate material.(5)

3. From various FPL publicity leaflets in the Herbert Marshall Collection and the Cuthbertson Papers.
4. The Camera Forward, n.d., (no. 1, January 1936), p.5. The journal was the monthly bulletin of the League, but only one issue was produced.
5. Ibid., p.4.

Throughout, the League's central coordinating body attempted to publicise the importance of film and photography for Labour organisations, and draw groups into its activities. Its self-appointed task was to 'endeavour to make all Left progressive political groups cine conscious'.(6) But the League's role extended beyond this: Labour and working class groups were to be encouraged to use films and photos for distinctly political purposes. They were to be used 'to forge a weapon to unite the working class movement', to contribute to 'exposing and combatting the evils of war, reaction and taboos' and to the opposition to 'all forms of reaction to the furtherance of World Peace'.(7) While gradually eschewing the sloganised formulae characteristic of the communist section of the Labour movement, the League undoubtedly conceived of its activities in terms of making a small but valuable contribution to the class struggle. The League saw itself assisting left and socialist agitation and propaganda work by putting forward an interpretation of events alternative to that dispensed by the conventional media, and in so doing combatting, in ideological terms, the more sinister aspects of media 'manipulation' - the everyday, unseen effects of exposure to what the League called 'false social values'.(8) As the League's Constitution revealed, its first object was

To produce and popularise films and photos of working class interest, giving a true picture of the workers today and of their organised struggle to improve these conditions. (9)

No less than Kino, the League was committed to a political use of film. Unlike Kino however, the League avoided any direct association with a specific political party, and although at various points during its existence the League aligned itself vaguely with socialist and communist elements in Britain, its abiding political commitment was a more general one, to the Labour movement and the working class, and to 'prog forces. While political differences between the two groups led therefore to a certain degree of overlapping of function and competition,

6. Home Movies and Home Talkies, January 1938, p.3.
7. BFI, FPL (4), Typescript, 'FPL', (speaker's notes), n.d., 1938; FPL (2), Publicity Circular, 'The Film and Photo League', 1936.
8. Ibid., FPL (2), Publicity Circular, 1936.
9. Ibid., FPL (2), Draft Constitution for the Workers' Film and Photo League', 1935. This was accepted by the League's committee in 1936.

the League's posture, under the circumstances of 'united front' and 'popular front' politics, which dominated the left of the Labour movement from 1935 onwards, complemented that of Kino, giving thereby the impression that these two groups comprised the core of a united or homogeneous 'workers' film movement'.

(ii) Organisation, Exhibition and Distribution

Propaganda apart, coordination was the League's major function. Given the widespread interest in amateur cinematography,(10) there was considerable potential for developing a 'left political cinema', but little by way of practical activity in that direction in 1934. The League not only devoted its energies to publicising the idea of such a cinema amongst cine enthusiasts, but assumed responsibility for assisting groups which wished to use film in this way, arranging for the production of material, providing guidance and advice, and generally providing a core of activists around which a left cinema could grow, bringing together people of diverse talents and interests. Consequently, during the year 1935-6, of the fifteen films in the production of which the League was involved, only one was specifically produced at the request of the League's central committee: the others were made at the request of other bodies, and different production units were formed on virtually every occasion, embracing members of the League and individuals from the commissioning bodies. Significantly, 'All productions were run by and from London, and no local groups were activated'.(11) At its most basic League coordination served to bring to the attention of groups the feasibility of film production and the existence of other interested groups throughout the country; and to provide equipment to enable local units to shoot material, and technical assistance in editing. Rhondda, a documentary containing remarkable scenes of unemployed miners scrambling across slag heaps in search of coal, predating by two years almost identical images in Paul Rotha's celebrated Today We Live,(12) was made by a group in South Wales after the League had made a camera available. Construction, shot by builders on a site in London, was edited

10. See, for example, Editorial, Amateur Cine World, April 1934, p.5. It was estimated in Sight and Sound, Spring 1935, p.7, that there were over 400,000 amateur film-makers in Britain, and 200 amateur film clubs.

11. BFI, FPL (unnumbered file), 'Production During 1935-6', n.d., ?March 1936.

12. Both sequences were shot by Donald Alexander, who worked as a documentary director and producer with Strand Films from 1936-1941.

and partly financed by the League. The FPL arranged for Kino to distribute both films.

In mid-1935 the League was 'a small and staffless society'(13) and only two provincial groups had affiliated to it by the end of the year, Manchester FPL and Hull Workers' Film Society. The League's strength resided in its twenty or so committee members and a further sixty fully paid up individual members, most of whom were based in London.(14) The League's coordinating role never really materialised beyond London until after mid-1937. As Kino discovered, having made a concerted effort to build up local cine units in 1936, though there may have been a body of interest, too few people were prepared to organise meetings and production work. It was only with the dramatic rise in the Left Book Club and popular frontist politics in 1937 that the League began to establish more widespread contacts and organise and coordinate film work among local provincial groups. By mid-1937 the League had affiliated groups in Manchester, Doncaster, Hull, Glasgow, Sheffield, Liverpool, Dundee, Norwich, North Shields, Lincoln, Durham, Oxford, Cambridge and Cardiff.(15) In 1938 the League had an individual fully-paid-up membership of 92, a mailing list of roughly 500, and 30 affiliated groups.(16) Typical of the organisations which affiliated were Aberdeen Independent Labour Party, Urmston and District Labour Party, Nottingham Cooperative Society Education Department, Walton-on-Thames Left Book Club and Croydon League of Youth.

The League had held a conference in conjunction with the Left Book Club in June 1937 'to discuss the coordination of sub-standard film work for Left propaganda'. A scheme was adopted intended to provide LBC groups regularly with visual propaganda, establish the League as the central coordinating body for all LBC groups which wished to show films or engage in film production, and provide a pool of resources for cooperation on film projects, particularly of national scope.(17)

13. BFI, FPL (2), Circular to Members, n.d., June 1935.
14. Ibid., FPL (2), Circular to Members, 28 February 1936.
15. Leftfilmfront, no.1, July 1937, p.3. This journal was the bulletin of the League. Further issues were produced but none have been discovered.
16. BFI, FPL (2), H.Cuthbertson to J.Reeves, 5 July 1939.
17. Leftfilmfront, no.1, July 1937, p.2.

The two main results of this development were firstly that the League experienced an upturn in its fortunes; its activities were given far wider publicity, its films subject to greater demand, and its status was dramatically improved. Secondly, a number of production units were formed, all under the auspices of the LBC groups, which, by mid-1938, were engaged in various projects under the League's supervision. Production units in Manchester, Reading, Sutton, Wembley and Pontypridd were 'simultaneously working on the first films to be made under the new production scheme'.(18)

The League was committed to a 'grand drive' 'to make all Left progressive political groups cine conscious. In this it had the help and support of the Left Book Club.'(19) It had also agreed with Kino in early 1938 to co-produce a film of May Day 1938 'in a first step towards the unification of all Left Cinema work', and planned a series of co-productions, including a full-length sound film.(20) The May Day joint production never materialised, but cooperation continued, culminating in the formation of a joint production group, the British Film Unit, which made at least two, possibly four, films.

League attempts at the coordination of sub-standard left cinema work under its own auspices may have jeopardised the project from its inception. While there appears to have been little by way of fertile ground upon which to cultivate a 'left cinema', at least until 1937, the League was probably handicapped by its image - of being little more than a London-based largely working class cine club, almost indistinguishable from home movie societies which were to be found in most towns and cities in England, some of which made films of 'concern' for the poor, the unemployed, etc.(21) This image can only have been confirmed by the League's poor organisation and extremely limited resources.

The WFPL started with no money (indeed, with a debt of £12 to Kino) and no premises. Throughout its existence it operated on a hand-to-mouth basis. All committee members were volunteers and many

18. BFI, FPL (2), Publicity Circular, 'Film and Photo League', n.d., May 1938. See Left News, July 1938, p.906.
19. Home Movies and Home Talkies, January 1938, p.3.
20. BFI, FPL (2), Publicity Circular, 'Film and Photo League', n.d., May 1938.

contributed to the League's funds or eased cash-flow problems with donations and loans. An indication of the pitifully meagre funds available in the early years is given in one of the League's Minute Books. A total of £8 3s was raised in loans from 19 members in mid-1935 to enable work to continue, the largest individual loans being £1 7s 6d from R.Wood, and £1 1s from Frank Jackson (both Kino members).(22) Annual deficits in the League's accounts were frequent, and by 1939 debts totalled approximately £100.(23) The League functioned on such a tight budget that its distribution work was seriously hampered by lack of sufficient copies of FPL films, as Cuthbertson revealed in reply to complaints from a League customer:

As we are only financed by small film-rentals and members' subscriptions, we generally have to send out our 'cutting-copies'. (24)

Members of the League were aware of the precarious nature of the group's existence and regularly made appeals for support and drives to secure new members and affiliations (fees in 1937 were 2s 6d per member of an LBC affiliated group, 2s 6d per other affiliated group, and the same for individual members). Hugh Cuthbertson tried to enlist the support of leading Labour figures such as G.D.H.Cole and John Strachey, and persuaded Victor Gollancz to loan £50 for the purchase of a Bolex camera.(25)

One of the League's most difficult and damaging problems was lack of suitable premises. On formation the League used a small room in Kino's offices at 86 Gray's Inn Road, WC1, and moved next door to 84 with Kino when it moved there after fire had destroyed Kino's offices (but not its films) in early 1935. In late 1935 relations between Kino and the League became rather strained after moves to secure the

21. Bolton Amateur Cine Association, for example, produced a 12 minute 16mm silent film on slum life in 1934, Gehenna in Britain. Kensington Housing Trust had its own film unit, under Mathew Nathan, and produced several documentaries on housing, maternity welfare and nurseries.

22. BFI, FPL (7), List of financial members - September 1935. Amount Loaned, in Minute Book 1934-5.

23. Ibid., FPL (2), Cuthbertson to Reeves, 5 July 1939.

24. Ibid., Film and Photo League to Mrs.Sinker, 14 May 1938.

25. Ibid., FPL (7), FPL Committee Minutes, 14 June 1937, Minute Book May 1935 - January 1936 (sic).

League's reunion with the distributor, and shortly after the League's annual general meeting in February 1936 it moved to one room at 4 Parton Street WC1, adjacent to the offices of Left Review. In May the same year the League moved to 5 Great Ormond Street WC1, sharing offices with Ivan Seruya's International Sound Films, the rooms being sub-let by the Friends of the Soviet Union. These offices were not suitable for the activities which the FPL wished to pursue, and on taking responsibility for the Secretaryship of the League in February 1937 Cuthbertson volunteered his flat at 3 Somerset Terrace WC1 as the League's headquarters. From this date until its demise the League functioned without satisfactory premises, and relied on the continuing goodwill of Cuthbertson and Leonard Peto who allowed their homes to be used for meetings and production work. Hopes had been high that rooms could be properly equipped and tenure made secure with a donation of £173 by Jean Ross (the League's former Secretary) in February 1936. But curiously few members of the League's Committee knew of this windfall until it was too late: in September 1936 £130 of this donation was unofficially transferred to Ivan Seruya to capitalise his own venture International Sound Films. (26) The money was never repaid during the League's lifetime, and Cuthbertson, relating the problems of the League in 1939 to Joseph Reeves, Manager of the Workers' Film Association, was convinced that the 'Seruya loan' played a large part in hindering the League's progress.(27)

Without suitable premises the League could never fully develop its coordinating and productive roles. Cuthbertson drew up plans to raise funds and approached a number of left-wing personalities for assistance. As he explained in an appeal to Victor Gollancz:

it is hopeless to expect any results in this work without a whole-time organiser or assistant, some tangible funds for film stock and publicity, and studio, club and projection premises where members can get together and work be done. Such a foundation outlay would in the (?) longer run be of far greater value to the movement than £500 or more invested in one professionally produced film.

If you, with your extensive contacts with progressive visionaries, and with your experience of finance, could sponsor a meeting to discuss such a project, this organisation would be very pleased to put a plan before you. Failing such a development, it must continue to be a somewhat ailing and ineffective child of the movement. (28)

- 26. BFI, FPL (2), Moscow Narodny Bank to Film and Photo League, 25 June 1936; FPL Committee Minutes, 20 January 1937.
- 27. Ibid., Cuthbertson to Reeves, 5 July 1939.

The League's often chaotic and casual management further contributed to its ineffectivity. According to Cuthbertson the League suffered set-backs because, the Seruya loan and his poor health apart,

we seem to have collected and entrusted a very unreliable crowd of workers, with intentions much greater than [?] realisations. (29)

Equally significantly, Frank Cox, a League Committee member who resigned in mid-1937 on becoming Film Publicity Officer for the London Cooperative Society, complained to Cuthbertson that

it is unfortunately one of the failings of this organisation that their meetings are never conducted in a businesslike manner. (30)

This was perhaps an under-statement, as the FPL's minutes for January 1937 reveal that no committee meetings had been officially held since the previous spring; (31) and the League almost disintegrated on closing down the operation at 4 Parton Street the same month, with administrative records, equipment and films being dispersed for safekeeping with individual committee members until new premises could be found.

Nor was the League's active core of members unwaveringly loyal or dedicated to promoting the organisation. Sime Seruya, who was given charge of the League's films in January 1937, engaged in doubtful dealings with the group's film stock; and Frank Cox, hitherto a regular contributor to League productions, not merely refused to participate in the shooting of the May Day 1937 film, but took footage of the event for a rival organisation, Fleet Films (which survived only a few weeks). Many committee members lost their positions through consistent non-attendance at meetings (including Herbert Marshall), and several stalwarts simply resigned in 1938 and early 1939, perhaps disillusioned with left wing politics or the inability of the League to achieve anything, or possibly abandoning the work as futile in view of the approaching war. (32)

28. BFI, FPL (unnumbered file), Cuthbertson to V.Gollancz, 22 July 1938.

29. Ibid., FPL (2), Cuthbertson to Reeves, 5 July 1939.

30. Ibid., F.Cox to Cuthbertson, 27 December 1936.

31. Ibid., FPL Committee Minutes, 20 January 1937.

32. Ibid., FPL (7), FPL Committee Minutes, 22 February 1937; List of Committee Members, 1938; D.Brotmacher to Cuthbertson, 20 March 1938; ibid., (2), P.Davies to Cuthbertson, n.d., ?July 1938.

After 1936 the League relied heavily for its survival on the energy and enthusiasm of Hugh Cuthbertson. His own periodic illness ensured that the organisation never functioned smoothly and efficiently and was only intermittently operational. Moreover, despite the respectability of popular frontist politics amongst a small section of the Labour movement, it is probable that without the organisational reach and political status of the Left Book Club, the League would have folded far sooner than it did.

On several occasions facing imminent collapse, and at its best working well within its limits, the League never recovered from Kino's moves in late 1935 to re-absorb the production group. As mentioned earlier, Kino had attempted to exert greater control over the League's production work by proposing that the League should dissolve and its members re-join Kino. Albert Pizer's resolution, put to the FPL Committee, asserted that the League

had not made enough progress in this first year, and that we had not been successful in activising groups in the provinces or getting other societies to affiliate. Also, that our production side could only develop through the influence and work of Kino as a distributor. (33)

A further determining factor in this move had apparently been, as Kino explained in publicising its own Production Committee, that 'Kino has practically no films which deal with conditions in this country'.(34) Yet up to January 1936 the League had produced an average of one film every month. It was therefore certainly not a dearth of films which motivated Kino. More likely, it would seem that political considerations were involved. In November the previous year two key League members Jean Ross and Sime Seruya had proposed that

To emphasise the non-sectarian nature of the organisation and encourage membership from other film societies the name of this organisation be changed.....(35)

33. BFI, FPL (7), FPL Committee Minutes, ?17 January 1936, Minute Book May 1935 - January 1936. My emphasis.
34. 'Kino Production Committee', Left Review, May 1936, p.415.
35. The wording of the Resolution is included in a letter from the League's Treasurer to a Cooperative Wholesale Society Bank in FPL (2), n.d., June 1936.

The word "Workers" was subsequently dropped from the League's title, the move being unanimously agreed at the annual general meeting of the League the following February. While such a move was broadly consistent with popular frontist politics it made the League vulnerable to influence from people interested more in film (and photography) per se rather than in film's political utility for the left of the Labour movement. Indeed, according to the evidence of Sime Seruya, the League had already shifted its perspectives considerably within the first 12 months of its separate existence:

we are essentially a broad-based non-party organisation - our aims should and do appeal to wide sections of the public.....

Kino is known as a courageous Distributor of Soviet filmsBut by just that courage makes it difficult to appear non-party and they have failed to obtain the collaboration of many sections most essential for their own and our work.

.....
Politically, if war or difficult relations occur with the USSR Kino may be rapidly closed down. (36)

Seruya urged that members vote in favour of developing the League 'as an independent, non-party, self-governing body', and stressed that a broad composition for the League was essential:

Cooperation is the keynote of progress. Several members join us because they want to do practical work, others because they are interested in the educational and cultural sides - one is as necessary as the other. (37)

In view of Kino's commitment to the Communist Party it would seem that Pizer's move to re-unite the League with Kino was grounded in political considerations: the League was drifting slowly beyond the influence of either the Party or Kino. Kino's attempt at a fait accompli by establishing its own production unit failed, as a core of nine League members

36. BFI, FPL (2), Written notes, (a statement opposing A.Pizer's resolution at the 1936 AGM), n.d., no signature (Sime Seruya, 1936).

37. Ibid. My emphasis.

rejected the move and re-activated the League on a new basis, appealing to those 'whose interest in films is mainly general', (38) and in so doing taking a further step towards transforming the League into a film society. A further consequence was that relations between the two groups became less amicable, particularly in view of the disaffection of several League members, presumably offended by the political intrigue and manoeuvring of both groups.

Thereafter, the League and Kino developed uneasily along similar paths, their activities often overlapping, and as the FPL became increasingly unable to pay its debts Kino became less tolerant of its poor-relation, resolving in November 1938 that all future film hire by the League would have to be pre-paid. (39) Moreover, Kino's original fear that the League's political perspectives would become increasingly obscure would seem to have been well-founded. The League appears to have developed a two-sided character, populated by both cine enthusiasts and politically-motivated film-makers, becoming more pronounced as the decade wore on. Indeed, David Brotmacher, the League's Treasurer, recalled that by 1938 most of the League's members, while vaguely left wing, were interested mainly in making films rather than producing material for political work; (40) and for some time the League acted indiscriminately as a distributor for local cine clubs, as part of its coordination work. (41)

Of the numerous projects planned only one League film appears to have been completed and released after January 1938. Such was the degree of general deterioration that in March 1938 the Kino Committee decided that several members still involved in the FPL should 'go into F+PL and get hold of it' to 'get the F+PL moving', and proposals were drawn up for joint production as a first step in this direction. (42) While there is insufficient evidence to draw firm conclusions it is

38. BFI, FPL (2), Circular, 'To All Members of the Workers' Film and Photo League', April 1936.

39. Ibid., FPL (3), B.Bower (for Kino) to D.Brotmacher (FPL Treasurer), 29 November 1938.

40. D.Brotmacher, in an interview with the author, 16 November 1977.

41. FPL (2), M.Chaplin to Cuthbertson, 20 May 1938.

42. H.Marshall, HMC, Kino Committee, Minutes, 23 March 1938.

probable that this move by Kino was more than an attempt to revivify the ailing League. The outcome was the splintering of the League still further and the formation of the British Film Unit, consisting of members of both groups, to produce a series of propaganda films for the Kino group, which had by now decided yet again to devote all its resources to distribution.(43)

Up to February 1936 the FPL's productions were more or less automatically taken by Kino for distribution, on a financial basis, the League confining itself to production. Exhibitions were given, of course, as part of its educational activities, but most exhibitions of League films were organised by or through Kino. An indication of the scope of the exhibition of FPL films in the early years is given by information contained in a League document detailing its production work for the 1935-6 year. According to this UAB (Workers' Newsreel No.3) was shown on 15 occasions, Transport 20 times, Workers' Newsreel No.4 27, Jubilee 32, Holiday from Unemployment 32, Construction 14, and Defence of Britain 12.(44) These seven films were shown a total of 152 times within a few months - Construction and Defence of Britain, for example, were only released in December 1935. It is unlikely that they were in great demand compared with Kino's Soviet material, although there is not enough evidence to draw firm conclusions. From 1936 this exhibition probably expanded, with the assistance of the LBC nationwide network, but here again there is a paucity of documentation. In the first few months of that year the entire collection of League material was being shown around the country in an extended tour to publicise the League and build contacts.(45) The League's balance sheet for the 1937-8 year reveals that film rentals raised £20 16s in revenue.(46) By far the majority of films in its library could be hired for 2s, some for 4s and two two-reelers for 10s each. As League films were shown as a supplement to the exhibition of larger productions obtained from Kino, or more usually before small audiences to illustrate talks, the average

43. PRO HQ, HO 45 21109/695383/67, 'Memorandum of Evidence', op.cit.

44. BFI, FPL (unnumbered file), 'Production During 1935-6', n.d., ?March 1936.

45. Ibid., FPL (2), Circular to Members, 28 February 1936.

46. Ibid., Film and Photo League. Balance Sheet, January 1936.

film hire was probably one or two films, costing no more than 6s. A minimum average film hire would reveal the maximum possible number of occasions on which FPL films were shown. If we take this minimum to be one film, with a hire charge of 2s, then the maximum number of shows for the 1937-8 year would have been 208, considerably less than Kino's exhibition for the same period.

The total audience size is indeterminate, but average audiences for individual shows were probably far smaller than Kino's. This was due less to the greater attractiveness of Kino's material and more to the League's organisational structure and policy. As Cuthbertson explained in mid-1938: 'As far as has been possible our policy has been to leave the field of distribution to Kino Films.'(47) The League had arrived at

a mutual understanding with Kino and.....will be chiefly catering for shows in rooms and small halls and encouraging production of films by amateurs. (48)

Such an accommodation was as much recognition of the League's inferior organisational network as a compromise between two groups implicitly in competition, as Cuthbertson revealed in reply to a request for films:

We had, I think, better refer you to Messrs. Kino.... as we are a production society and not organised or equipped for projection outside London, except where we have members in the locality, or others willing to lend their projectors. (49)

Correspondence in the Cuthbertson Papers suggests that the demand for League films was far greater than the actual number of shows given or for which films were provided. Poor administration accounts

- 47. BFI, FPL(unnumbered file), Cuthbertson to S.Freedman, (Secretary of the joint production unit), 19 July 1938.
- 48. Left News, August 1937, p.479. See also Leftfilmfront, no.1, July 1937, p.3.
- 49. FPL (6), Cuthbertson to Shildon Left Book Club, 17 February 1938.

in some part for this discrepancy. The League simply failed to reply to many inquiries.(50) But it could not always meet demand through lack of films, as Cuthbertson implied in reply to an inquiry from Bristol:

glad to hear always from people who want to PRODUCE (overflooded with letters wanting to hire - but so few films - we want amateurs to get busy and rectify this.) (51)

Since the League possessed only one copy of most of its films its distribution/exhibition work was at the mercy of its customers. Some failed to return films immediately after use or pay hire charges,(52) and films were frequently returned in a damaged state. Subsequently, in December 1937 the League's Committee resolved to restrict its hire service to affiliated bodies and members, and only on occasions where suitable projection apparatus was known to be available.(53) As there were no more than 30 affiliated groups at the peak of its activities League distribution/exhibition work was consequently far more circumscribed than Kino's.

Parallel with Kino however the League developed international contacts, and provided material for several organisations in North America (Toronto Workers' Educational Association, Ontario Left Book Group, New York Film and Photo League), Australia (Sydney LBC) and South Africa (Johannesburg Left Wing Social Club), and arranged at the request of Herbert Marshall an exchange of material with film organisations in Moscow.(54) In Britain the League attempted to broaden its support through close collaboration with the Left Book Club, (55) and

50. BFI, FPL (2), see for example letters from the National Clarion Cycling Club, 10 and 25 November 1938, and from the Combined Apprentice Chapel, Watford Branch, 20 and 29 March 1938.
51. Ibid., Cuthbertson to G.Thomas, 17 February 1938.
52. Ibid., see for example the League's correspondence with A.S.Willis, May - August 1938.
53. Ibid., FPL (7), FPL Committee Minutes, 15 December 1937.
54. Ibid., FPL (2), see correspondence in this file; FPL (7), FPL Committee Minutes, 27 May 1935, 3 June 1935. The League also acquired a number of silent newsreel from Castle Films in New York, in 1937-8.
55. See Left News, June 1937, p.392; August 1937, pp.479-80; July 1938, p.906.

appealed to many national trade union organisations to arrange shows and commission productions, such as the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers and the Transport and General Workers' Union.(56)

A reliable indication of the range of organisations hiring FPL material in the post-1936 period is given in the correspondence to be found in the Cuthbertson Papers, and the following list is a representative sample:

- Urmston and District Labour Party
- Romford and District LBC
- Birmingham LBC
- Aldershot LBC
- Hackney Labour Party
- Barrow LBC
- National Clarion Cycling Club
- Bristol Branch of the National Union of Shop Assistants,
Warehousemen and Clerks
- Aberdeen ILP
- Bromley Labour Party
- Nottingham Cooperative Society Education Department
- Plymouth LBC Film Group
- Willesden Theatre Group
- Walton-on-Thames LBC
- Arun Film Society
- Rugby LBC
- Lancashire and Cheshire Film Service (Kino Regional Agent)
- Holborn Labour Party League of Youth
- Croydon League of Youth
- Dover Labour Party
- ILP London and Southern Counties Division
- Croydon Labour Party
- Manchester Film and Photo League
- Hackney Film and Photo League

Individual films proved popular with particular organisations. Construction, for example, was of agitational value mainly for building workers' unions, and was apparently shown almost exclusively to thirty of their branches within six months of its completion.(57) The various reels

56. BFI, FPL (7), FPL Committee Minutes, 8 March 1937, 12 April 1937; H.Marshall, HMC, various items of correspondence.

57. World Film News, June 1936, p.21.

covering national hunger marches not surprisingly were popular with branches of the NUWM. FPL films were screened, paradoxically, before less varied audiences than those attending exhibitions of films from Kino's library. This was no doubt due to the League's organisational problems, but also to the League's far lower national profile. It did not, moreover, enjoy a close relationship with the Communist Party or any of its orbital groups - other than Kino itself; and the League lacked the widespread contacts which Kino developed in the Labour movement and the film industry.

One area where the League did surpass the work of Kino however was the amateur cine movement. Many local groups showed League productions, and some participated in the League's educational and production work, such as the North London Film Society. Hugh Cuthbertson's extensive contacts in this respect were particularly important, drawing into 'left political cinema' leading cine enthusiasts such as George Sewell (Vice-President of the Institute of Amateur Cinematography), who produced Gaiety of Nations, an anti-war film, which was shown widely through the League, and Mathew Nathan, who produced Pomp and Circumstance, Housing Progress and Nursery School.

League exhibition was on a much smaller scale than that of Kino. Correspondingly the exhibition services which it provided were more limited. All the FPL's material was on silent 16mm stock, and some films were available on 9.5mm. Sound disc commentaries were available from 1937 onwards, and some films were specially produced for such accompaniment. Spanish Travail, for example, shot by League members in Spain, was 'cut to the sound of the mass recitation of "On Guard for Spain"'.(58) Commentary scripts and recorded music were also available. League projectors could be hired for use with the FPL's Kodachrome films such as Coronation May Day, but before 1937 the League had to hire the projectors from Kino for its own shows. Also from 1937 onwards the League offered speakers from within its own ranks to accompany film exhibitions at meetings in the London area.(59) Charges for film hire

58. Left News, December 1937, p.624.

59. Leftfilmfront, no.1, July 1937, p.3.

for full-length exhibitions given by League members with a talk to introduce the films were usually £1.(60) League films were intended for low-key exhibitions before small audiences which did not usually charge an entrance fee (unlike Kino); and the services which the League provided corresponded to this: a typical show could be given for far less than £1 in 1937, whereas a Kino show, intended for audiences upwards of 100, could be had for £3 - £5.

(iii) Production

Of the 27 films which the League produced between November 1934 and December 1938 two-thirds were of a documentary or agitational type; the rest were newsfilms or newsreels. Description will be confined to about a quarter of these. The accounts which follow are based on the viewing of all extant League Films, in the Cuthbertson Collection, now in the National Film Archive, and elsewhere.(61) Firstly, however, some account is necessary of the development of the League as a production organisation.

The League's principal role throughout its existence was the coordination of production work, and in all its publicity proclaimed itself as the only working class organisation in Britain specifically concerned with the production of films. With desperately poor resources it was reliant on other organisations or individuals commissioning the League or requesting its assistance. Consequently only one of its productions in the 1935-6 year, Winter, had been planned by the League. The rest were financed by private loans or the commissioning bodies, and either co-produced or completed with League assistance. FPL production units therefore were formed on an ad hoc basis, and usually dissolved on completion of the film in question. They were consequently fluidic, constantly changing in composition according to who was available and who was willing to assume responsibility for a film. Holiday from Unemployment, a documentary film on the work of a camp in Oxford for unemployed Welsh miners, and commissioned by the Camp

60. Leftfilmfront, no.1, July 1937, p.3.

61. Of considerable value in this respect has been an unpublished descriptive catalogue compiled by Victoria Wegg-Prosser, dated 1977.

Committee, was finished with League assistance. The production unit consisted of E.Stich, J.Turner, Sam Handel, Herbert Green, Albert Pizer, Philip Leacock and P.Rhodes. Defence of Britain, financed by private loans, was produced by Frank Jackson, John Maltby, Jean Ross, and P.Bradshaw; and Winter was produced by Ralph Bond, Irene Nicholson, J.Goldmann, Peter Davies, Albert Pizer, Sam Handel, Frank Jackson and (?)R.McNaughton.(62)

A variety of organisations approached the League to produce material, including the Friends of the Soviet Union, the Daily Worker, the Young Communist League, North Kensington Labour Party, the British Esperanto Association, the Left Book Club and the National Clarion Cycling Club.(63) Through lack of funds most of the productions requested never materialised. Similarly, a number of production 'groups' were formed within the League's central organisation in London - feature, newsreel, and still photography - but non appears to have really succeeded in establishing any sense of identity and continuity. The newsreel group, for example, consisted of people only free to shoot at weekends, which made it difficult for the group to function adequately; and no funds were available to support a reasonable coverage of working class 'news' beyond events in London. The group was consequently compelled to provide what it called a monthly 'Kino-Eye' bulletin, which would be less topical and of more lasting value.(64) Four films were produced, known collectively as Workers' Newsreel No.4, and the group folded in late 1935. Lack of funds as much as lack of cohesion was the source of the League's paralysis as an independent production organisation. Although in 1937 and early 1938 it succeeded in producing material without sponsorship or commissions, this was probably due more to personal donations by Hugh Cuthbertson and one or two others to League coffers than the financial strength of the group. Ivan Seruya shot a good deal of footage in Spain for the League's Spanish Travail and Spain 1936-7. Cuthbertson financed and supervised

- 62. BFI, FPL (unnumbered file), Production During 1935-6, n.d., ?March 1936.
- 63. Ibid., FPL (4), Suggestions for Film Scenarios, n.d.
- 64. Ibid., FPL (2), List of League Groups and Projects, n.d., ?May 1935.

the production of a series of films on May Day 1937, Coronation May Day (a shorter version of which was released as The Merry Month of May), The Spirit of May Day, and May the First 1937. Other purely League productions included A Penny to Spend, Generous Soil and People's Front Newsreel (the first and only reel of 'A series of films intended to run progressively in the style of "March of Time"').(65) By early 1938 the League's production work had ground to a halt: no more films were being completed and released, even though much footage was being shot. The People's Front Newsreel scheme had envisaged a sequence of seven monthly 'bulletins' but only one was released. A film on events in China never materialised despite help from the China Campaign Committee; and a two- or three-reel compilation of footage dealing with British and European events during 1937 and early 1938 failed to appear even though the footage had already been acquired from Castle Films in New York. The League was clearly close to collapse. Under such circumstances some League members were receptive to Kino's proposals for joint production, but differences in perspective and financial hardship again precluded any effective cooperation. As Cuthbertson explained to Sol Freedman, of Kino, in reply to suggestions that the project needed more money to see it through to completion:

it is doubtful if we would be able to anywhere near meet the cost of the film by our rentals. It is therefore very doubtful if the League could consider any further expenditure on the May Day film.... (66)

Kino's assistance and Cuthbertson's enthusiasm apart, probably the only reason for the League's continuation in 1938 was the involvement of the Left Book Club. The Club had gone to considerable lengths to publicise League films, encourage Groups to use its material, and generally assist in the FPL's project of making people 'cine conscious'. One of the main thrusts of League work in this direction was the formation of production units and, apart from spawning two in London (Hackney FPL and Islington FPL), had only succeeded in building affiliated units in Manchester and Hull, of which at least the former had, by 1937, produced and shown its own material: Lancashire Peace Demonstration, Manchester at Work and A Trip to Russia.(67) In

65. BFI, FPL (2), Film and Photo League 'Film List', n.d., ?August 1937.

66. Ibid., FPL (unnumbered file), Cuthbertson to Freedman, 19 July 1938, and 27 Jul 1938.

67. Unfortunately little is known of either group or these films.

mid-1937 the LBC convened a conference with the League 'to discuss the coordination of substandard film work for Left propaganda'; (68) and at the Club's summer school at Digswell Park in July/August 1937 the League gave instruction on film production and produced Red, Right and Bloo (a 'story-comedy documentary') with the help of students at the school.(69) The scheme of coordination involved the League providing instruction, guidance, equipment, editing facilities, scenarios, and an organisational focal point. It was anticipated that the types of film to be made would cover 'local conditions, working class life, cultural problems. Story and documentary films, also subjects suitable for children'.(70) Various LBC/FPL production units subsequently came into operation, but there is nothing in League files to suggest that any films were completed. Paradoxically, at that point in its history when the League made its most significant political and organisational breakthrough, the central organisation was on the verge of disintegration. League productive work consequently came to an end, and the more politically motivated of its members joined with associates from Kino to form the British Film Unit.

Sharing the general belief widely held within left circles of the power of the film medium to convey 'reality' and of its value in influencing opinion, members of the League, judging by the character of their productions, attached immense importance to the newsfilm, the newsreel and the documentary as the cinematic forms most appropriate for the League's educational and propagandist roles. Only one feature, Fight, was produced by the League, compared with 11 newsfilms or newsreels and 15 documentary-propaganda films. Undoubtedly there was an awareness that

films capable of appreciation only by the converted are already far in excess of, for example, thirty-minute 'entertainment' features explaining the important aspects of the struggle to the politically unenlightened. Thus, one object is to correct this trend in the League's early development. (71)

68. Leftfilmfront, no.1, July 1937, p.1.
69. This film was selected for exhibition by the Royal Photographic Society.
70. Leftfilmfront, no.1, July 1937, p.1.
71. BFI, FPL (2), Publicity Circular, 'Film and Photo League', n.d., 7May 1938.

But the League's Central London Branch, the main unit of the FPL, had already decided in view of the current political situation

to postpone the production of any long 'feature' and to concentrate on the production of as many 'shorts' of topical and Socialist interest as possible. (72)

All the League's surviving productions tend to use a 'camera as witness' approach, but few if any are confined to this mode of filming, employing agitational techniques in newsfilms as much as in documentaries. Examples of the League's newsfilm and newsreel production are UAB (Workers' Newsreel No.3), Workers' Newsreel No.4, News Review 1937, Challenge of Youth and People's Front Newsreel. UAB was made as a record of the national demonstration of 24 February 1935 against the Unemployment Assistance Board and the new procedures for assessing and dispensing 'unemployment assistance' which had come into force in January that year. The crucial aspect of the UAB was that its scales of relief effectively reduced payments for many people. Large-scale protests and demonstrations took place throughout the country in January and February 1935 and the Government issued instructions to the Board to maintain existing scales of relief until the furore had subsided. The demonstration on 24 February was a national day of demonstration organised by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, calling for the complete repeal of the Unemployment Act of 1934, Part II of which had introduced the UAB. Still attached to the communist section of the movement the WFPL appealed via the pages of the Daily Worker for people to shoot 16mm footage (roughly 25 feet) of their local demonstrations. The League itself had four people filming marches in Hyde Park and Shoreditch, and the deputation to the Ministry of Labour.(73)

The twelve minute film opens with a close-up of a report in the Daily Worker of a meeting in Wood Green. 'Bury the UAB' is followed by scenes of a mass demonstration on 'February 24' 'Against the Slave Act'. Various banners belonging to a number of contingents are seen in the gathering. In Hyde Park we see speakers on a platform, including Tom Mann and James Maxton. Newspaper reports follow detailing those local councils which supported the action of workers in opposition to the UAB's proposed cuts in relief. The film appears to end with 'Smash the

72. BFI, FPL (7), FPL Production Committee Minutes, 31 March 1938.

73. Daily Worker, 19 February 1935, p.4; 26 February 1935, p.4.

Starvation Act', 'Down with the National Government', but an 'Epilogue' follows. 'Hyde Park Arrests: Men in Court - Only Police Give Evidence for Prosecution'; and the film finally ends with a jibe at the Daily Herald's claimed failure to report these events in detail.

This was the first production of the League since the group had split from Kino, and while lacking the agitational qualities of earlier material is considerably more accomplished. As the WFPL Newsreel Group reported after the film's completion, UAB 'was technically and in every other way a hundred per cent improvement on all past newsreel work'.(74)

Workers' Newsreel No.4 was composed of individual films produced by the League at the request of other bodies, and re-edited by Kino into a 'workers' newsreel' in the late summer of 1935. The individual items were 'May Day in Hyde Park', 'Soviet Folk Dancers in London for the International Festival', 'The ILP Summer School in Letchworth' and the 'Visit of Tom Mann to a Pioneers Camp'. All but the item on Soviet Dancers has survived. May Day 1935: Labour Marches to Celebrate May Day is incomplete, footage having been taken out, lasts barely one and a half minutes, and has no titles other than the opening one. The opening shots show a flurry of banners moving in front of a hoarding above the entrance to an underground station - its message reads: 'Long Live the King'. There are scenes in Hyde Park, and shots of Herbert Morrison addressing an audience. ILP Summer School August 1935 was shot by Kino, and has already been described. London Workers' Outing, Easter, 1935, a two-minute film bereft of titles (except the opening one), depicts sports and games at a Pioneers' Camp at High Beech. Tom Mann and Harry Pollitt are seen addressing a gathering.

In 1935 the League abandoned the production of regular newsreels and concentrated on short newsfilms - films lasting between two and five minutes, each giving news of one particular event. The above clearly fall into this category. Despite numerous attempts, and there are many unedited sequences of actuality footage in the Cuthbertson Collection

74. BFI, FPL (2), 'List of League Groups and Projects, n.d., ?May 1935.

to demonstrate that this conception of film-making was maintained (including some fascinating footage of the Cable Street confrontation), no further newsfilms were released until 1937. In that year various League members produced material which was later re-edited by Kino with other footage to form News Review 1937. The review consisted of the following items: 'Busmen's Strike', 'May Day', 'Mosley Demonstrations at Whitechapel and N.London', 'Labour Party demand Arms for Spain at Trafalgar Square', 'Communist meeting in support of International Brigade', 'Strikes in Trinidad', 'Workers' Sports Olympiad at Amsterdam' and 'Boycott Japan demonstration in Oxford Street'.(75) Probably all but those items depicting foreign events were produced by League members. One of the newsfilms included in the review which has survived is 'Busmen's Strike'. Originally known as Busmen's Holiday it is a five-minute item on the London bus strike, the occasion of a confrontation between a communist-led trade union rank and file and the social democratic trade union leadership (dominated by Ernest Bevin). The film was shot by Herbert and Raymond Green. The strike, arising from demands for a reduction in working hours, is indicated by opening scenes of people walking to work, rows of stationary buses, busworkers marching and shots of clenched fists and banners. Speakers address a gathering in Hyde Park. The film then changes abruptly to scenes of the strikers having a day out in Brighton, where they have a meal in a hotel, hear Tom Mann deliver a speech, and go down to the beach to enjoy community singing to the accompaniment of an accordion and a small brass band. In the incomplete surviving copy there are no titles, and there is little by way of explanation of the issues at stake in the strike, dealing more with the 'day out' than either the conflict with the union leadership or the dispute between the busworkers and their employers. The film has the character of a 'home movie', cheerfully capturing the holiday spirit of the workers rather than any sense of political or economic struggle.

Examples of the 'documentary' productions of the League are Revolt of the Fishermen, Dockworkers, March Against Starvation, Holiday From Unemployment, Transport and May First 1937. Shot in Hull by Michael

75. H.Marshall, HMC, Kino Publicity Leaflet, n.d., ?November 1937.

Burke and Adrienne Hanne Revolt of the Fishermen describes the strike of Easter 1935. The ten-minute film opens with shots of a lighthouse, the seashore and a fishing boat returning to port. 'British fishermen bring to our shores the bulk of the fish we eat.' A close-up of fish on the quay is followed by 'The price we pay is high, but the fishermen get - what?'. The film proceeds to detail the fishermen's grievances, and contrasts scenes of 'derelict homes' with a poster for the Ideal Home Exhibition. Despite danger at sea 'they have suffered terrific (sic) wage cuts'. However, 'The Transport Workers' Union begins to organise on a national basis'; and we see local TGWU officials addressing meetings. 'Easter 1935 strike for recognition of Union.' Closed goods depots are shown, a quayside is deserted, pickets await the return of boats to recruit new members to the union. Some strikers are seen fishing for food from rowing boats; others are shown waiting with police for news of the negotiations. 'The Strike is won' is followed by rapid shots of a pub and smiling faces. The return to work is suggested by fishing boats leaving harbour and returning laden with fish; and the film ends with 'Like all Workers with an Organised Front - Unceasing in their Fight for Social Security'.

While the events depicted actually took place, and some of the scenes are used to good effect, the film is pervaded by a curiously ingenuous story-like approach. The struggle for unionism and better conditions within the industry was no doubt hard fought, and the outcome certainly not a foregone conclusion, but the film presents the issues with fairy-tale simplicity, presenting the strike more as a parable than an account of a particular dispute.

March Against Starvation, funded partly by the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, is probably one of the League's most accomplished films. Containing footage shot in various parts of the country by London and provincial League members, the film provides a detailed account of a number of NUWM contingents setting out on their trek towards London, their convergence on the capital, the organisation of the March under Wal Hannington's direction, and the demonstrations and rallies which took place in London in November 1936. The film is a cooperative production, with members of Manchester FPL, Doncaster Workers' Film Society, Glasgow Kino (Helen Biggar), International Sound Films (the Seruyas), the Socialist Film Council (Rudolph Messel) and Cambridge Film Productions (Geoffrey Innes and James Harris, who

had provided newsreel material for the League in 1934) contributing to the filming and editing of the production. It was probably this diversity of involvement which was responsible for the release of the film being delayed until April 1937.

Presented as a 'Story of the National Protest 1936' the two-reel film opens with close-ups of pamphlets and books concerned with nutrition. Graphics detail the amount of money which the unemployed receive for food, the argument being reinforced by scenes of slum housing and shots of 'newspaper headlines regarding the plight of children suffering from the effects of malnutrition. A close up of a UAB official is preceded by 'further cuts are threatened by UAB' and succeeded by 'But the NUWM has organised the workless people'. Hannington is seen in his office organising the 'National Protest March', and marching routes are detailed. The film moves quickly to scenes of various activities in preparation for the hunger march, including people collecting money on the street and marchers choosing footwear. Numerous contingents of marchers are seen setting off from various cities, and there are shots of Ellen Wilkinson addressing crowds before the Jarrow march (a coincidental protest march which specifically excluded NUWM involvement). One contingent is seen approaching 'York - the Forbidden City'; and shots of food being prepared and tables set in a Salvation Army hostel are followed by 'But imported police bar the way and try to break the marchers' self-control'. The first reel ends here with a still of Baldwin and a caption, 'We cannot receive the marchers'. Continuing with the progress of the same contingent we see shots of the marchers' unscheduled trek to Selby, in whose town hall they are allowed to eat and sleep. Some have their hair cut and others their clothes washed. A Welsh contingent is seen preparing food and eating on the roadside. Several members of the group are seen in close-up, and they display their war-medals. A contingent of women marchers is shown arriving at a scheduled rest-point to a warm reception from a largely female gathering, and a title reads, 'Women Unite'. The 'Scottish East Contingent' is featured, and details of one man who died en route are given: 'He gave his life in the fight to end the Means Test and Poverty'. There follows footage of ranks of police in readiness, and graphics explain how the marchers converged on London. 'London Labour Welcomes Marchers', and a rally is seen in Trafalgar Square, addressed by Harry Pollitt and others. The November Day of Remembrance is identified by reference to the laying of wreaths. Quickly juxtaposed with scenes of another mass rally in Hyde Park, in which

various speakers are seen in close-up, including Clement Attlee and Ben Tillett, is the following caption: 'Baldwin now says "We cannot receive the marchers"'. The latter part of this is crossed out and replaced by '"I will arrange that the Ministry of Labour receive a deputation"'. The message is reinforced by close-ups of marchers and the final title, 'Mass Pressure Wins'.

While having less than newsreel value when released, the film retained a strong propaganda value, for it recorded not merely a hunger march but a national protest against the Unemployment Assistance Board which, at the instruction of the National Government, had postponed introducing its revised unemployment relief scales in February 1935 until November 1936. The NUWM response in the autumn of 1936 had been the same as that in early 1935 - to launch a massive publicity campaign and organise a national protest to try and compel the Government to change its policy and, ultimately, repeal the Unemployment Act of 1934. As with previous Kino or League films of the 1934 and 1935 NUWM marches that of 1936 was part of this long-term publicity campaign, and lost nothing of its relevance despite the long delay in release because the NUWM campaign continued throughout 1937 in opposition to the implementation of the new relief scales.

Just as national hunger marches proved irresistible attractions to the League and other left wing film agencies, so May Day was a regular source for League film activity. The events arising therefrom (for there were usually two May Day demonstrations, one organised by the communist section of the Labour movement, taking place on the first day of May, the other organised by the social democratic sections taking place on the first Sunday of the month) provided film groups with much subject material with which to contribute to both the ritual of celebrating the traditions of Labour history and to the affirmation of the political unity of the Labour movement. The optimism and buoyancy of the broad left of this movement during the early months of 1937 has been well described by John Saville in his excellent article, 'May Day 1937'.⁽⁷⁶⁾ Amid this confident atmosphere Cuthbertson and members of the League planned a series of films on the year's May Day demonstrations

76. J.Saville, 'May Day 1937', in A.Briggs, J.Saville (eds.), Essays in Labour History, 1918 - 1939 (London, 1977).

and their significance. May First 1937 is a ten-minute documentary record of the communist demonstrations in London. Much of the material shot for this film was to be incorporated in a larger film, Coronation May Day, which was intended to have a greater propaganda content, juxtaposing the Coronation celebrations with war preparations and poverty, and the mass organised opposition of the Labour movement to both. Cuthbertson's instructions for camera units preparing to film the demonstrations have survived and provide a glimpse of this optimism and a suggestion of the League's loose political and organisational unity:

The May Day Section of the film will aim to express the Creative, eager JOY of the Progressive movement - hope and Faith in the Future - vigour, etc.

.....
 Plenty of close-ups.....Avoid long tedious shots of people marching. Very few shots should be longer than 3 feet. Banners, near, mid and close are very effective.Specially remember HAPPY expressions in view of theme. Keep outlook for UNUSUAL incidents or police incidents. AVOID shots of normal police control. Get united front salutes.....Plenty of shots of YOUTH. (77)

May First 1937 begins with 'The record of the inspiring spectacle of London's militant workers', and scenes of marchers. Preparations for the march are shown, including the construction of floats. Outside an underground station a contingent gathers, complete with brass band. Captions make explanatory references to various topical issues publicised by banners seen among the marching contingents. A banner, for example, declaring 'Bakers ban night work' is elaborated in the following way: 'Bread gives us strength but it takes it out of these men who lead the TU ranks'. A Daily Worker float, members of the Socialist Christian movement and a contingent of the Clarion Cycling Club are seen, together with posters and placards depicting Spanish Republican leaders, the Left Book Club and Unity Theatre. The League even had its own contingent, with banners 'Show Workers' Films' and a car on top of which is a member 'operating' a tripod camera. '40,000 people greet the procession' as it enters Hyde Park. Individual left wing and communist personalities are seen in close-up, including Tom Mann, Bert Papworth and Ted Bramley. While the film is little more than a catalogue of the contingents in the demonstration, and is somewhat pedestrian in approach, it nevertheless

77. BFI, FPL (4), Notes for Cameramen: May Day Demonstration, n.d., April 1937.

reveals that such events could be extremely colourful and imaginative. Equally significantly, it reveals that this particular demonstration was the occasion for an impressive display of united frontism, attracting a wide assortment of left groups and tendencies.

Of a more directly propagandistic or agitational character are such League productions as The Merry Month of May, Red, Right and Bloo, Construction, Jubilee and Winter. Construction was produced by a group of union militants in the building trade in south London, with the assistance of League members. It opens by informing the audience that the film was made by 'the men on the job', and shows various aspects of building work - surveying, carpentry, bricklaying, etc., with a concern for emphasising the 'dignity of labour' reminiscent of the mainstream documentary film-makers. One of the men opens his wage-pocket 'Total £2 12s 6d' and goes home to a slum tenement. 'Only 100% trade union will improve our conditions.' A dispute is then re-enacted in which a trade unionist engaged in recruitment on the site is sacked as an 'agitator'. The workers discuss the situation at a mass meeting and send a deputation to the management, demanding the dismissed man's reinstatement. 'We'll strike for reinstatement'. An empty building site is seen, and then, 'Carry on lads - we've won!'. Work resumes: 'Unity Wins'.

Much of the shooting for this film was done secretly on the site, with a carpenter, Alf Garrard, who was also an amateur cine enthusiast, shooting haphazardly with his camera hidden behind his work apron.(78) The ten-minute film was only one of a number of propagandist activities by building workers in London, and arose from a specific confrontation with employers the previous year, (1934). Funds (the film cost £8 to make) were raised by such expedients as 'raffling a pound note', and equipment and editing facilities were provided by the League. Its value of course was confined largely to the building trade, and the film was shown mainly to groups of building workers, causing 'something of a sensation in Trade Union circles'. Indeed, it was apparently considered sufficiently valuable as propaganda to prompt Kino, which distributed the film, to organise a meeting of delegates from builders' and other unions to discuss the value of films of this type, and plans

78. For full details of the production of this film, see, B.Hogenkamp, "Making Films With A Purpose", in J.Clark et al, Culture and Crisis in Britain in the Thirties op.cit., pp.262-5.

were drawn up to produce similar films in cooperation with a number of other unions - though nothing appears to have been achieved.(79) Attempts were made in the spring of 1937 by the League to encourage trade union organisations to commission the production of similar propaganda/recruitment films. Herbert Marshall, acting on behalf of the FPL, wrote to William Squance, General Secretary of ASLEF in the following terms:

we do not suggest making big films for big cinemas, but small films on 16mm for shows in TU halls, Coop. halls, etc., which can be run at a very low cost.

Our proposal is this: that we make a film specially for the ASLEF, as their particular work is one which lends itself to this powerful medium. We would show on the screen the skill required in running an engine, the heroism often called for (as the candidateship for the Carnegie Medal goes to show) and the part the Union has played in improving conditions and maintaining them. Let the General Secretary (on the screen) tell of the drive for a 100% membership and the work of the Union.

This film could then be shown in every depot and every Railway centre in the country, as well as be distributed in the usual ways by Messrs. Kino Films Ltd. (80)

National trade union organisations were generally unresponsive, probably considering that attractive though such film propaganda may be, the cost was too great for the resources available, and that its value was too indeterminate. Just as documentarists were unable to persuade them to commission films so the League, its status and politics less than clear cut, was unsuccessful in this respect, and no other films of the Construction type were produced.

One of the most interesting examples of the League's agitational productions is Jubilee. Shot by the Green brothers of the North London Film Society Cine Unit, and edited in conjunction with other League members, Jubilee contrasts the 1935 Silver Jubilee celebrations with working class poverty and the drift towards war. The film opens with 'Rejoice, You Children' and scenes of tea parties in East London streets decorated with bunting and banners declaring 'Long Live King George'. Crowds line the streets, held back by police, as a parade of Life Guards

79. Kino News, n.d., May 1936; World Film News, June 1936, p.21.
80. H.Marshall, HMC, Marshall to Squance, n.d., March 1937.

heralds the approach of the royal family. The royal carriage appears amid cheering, waving crowds, and newsreel cameras are shown recording the arrival of the King and Queen at a hospital and then moving on to Mile End Station. During this sequence there are suggestions that the celebrations have more than celebratory significance. Intercut with images of the crowds cheering the arrival of the royal entourage is a shot of a poster advertising a theatrical performance, the title of the play being 'The Age of Innocence'. Shots of commercial newsreel cameras recording the event are juxtaposed with one of a street sign, 'Commercial Road'. The tone of the film subsequently changes dramatically as images of the procession of cavalry and the royal carriage are inter-cut in a quickening montage with shots of bunting and flag-waving crowds. 'The National Government Celebrates....', scenes of flags and the royal carriage, '25 Years of Progress'. Immediately, we see shots of slum houses, women peeling potatoes at an outdoor tap, people sat outside their decrepit homes. 'Progress?' is followed by scenes outside an employment exchange with lines of men queueing, some inside reading newspaper advertisements, and men standing about, with a sign 'No Hands Wanted' prominent. 'Progress?' the film again asks, before showing a group of war-disabled singing in the street, a war memorial, and a placard advertising for recruits to the army: 'Start your Army career in Jubilee Year'. Images of troops on parade quickly give way to, 'ProgressTowards.....War', and the film ends with scenes of warships at sea and military planes in formation.

Media coverage of the Jubilee celebrations was extensive. Newsreel companies had always thrived on set-piece events and particularly the spectacular pageantry of royal occasions, which never ceased to attract popular interest, both live and in the cinema. But Jubilee is more than an attack on the 'commercial' motives behind newsreel coverage of these celebrations. The left in Britain saw the media coverage of them as a sustained glorification of Britain's imperial past and present, and identified this as a conspiracy of the various sections of the ruling elite to encourage unity behind the National Government during a difficult period. The Government had already faced serious opposition to its Unemployment Assistance Board scheme in the first two months of the year, had created a furore over the publication of the White Paper on Defence in March, and had been dealt a severe shock with Hitler's revelations concerning Germany's air power the same month. These last two events had set in train a nationwide discussion

as to the possibility of a future war and raised doubts as to how far the Government could be trusted in connection with its rearmament plans. The issues of government credibility and national support were brought into sharper relief by the anticipated imminent resignation of the Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald. The Jubilee celebrations coincided with a period of political uncertainty within government circles, during which the Conservative Party leadership manoeuvred to strengthen its grip on the administration, aware that MacDonald's departure could prompt serious questions as to the 'national' character of the National Government.

Under these circumstances Jubilee is an attempt to suggest that the Jubilee celebrations are a spectacle intended to strengthen the sinews of national unity, contrived as much for newsreel consumption and therefore for mass cinema audiences as for live public involvement. But it is also an attempt to raise the question of the discrepancy between what the media presented to the world and the 'reality' behind that partial view. The familiar trappings of imperial glory are contrasted with the salient features of 'Britain today' - poverty, slum housing, and unemployment. The nation's past and present are typified by images of war veterans - disabled, destitute and rejected. The National Government, in contrast to its own film publicity, and that of the various newsreel companies, is not, the film argues, leading the country out of depression, but into war and, so it implies, using the Jubilee celebrations 'to divert attention' away from the true conditions of Britain and muster support for its rearmament programme.

(iv) Decline

The aims of the Film and Photo League were just as ambitious as those of Kino, but perhaps a little less realistic. Constrained constantly by a deficiency of funds, ill-equipped, badly run, with a severely restricted organisational reach and an increasingly unreliable membership, the League was unable to achieve the national status enjoyed by Kino, either as producer or distributor. As the League progressed under Cuthbertson's enthusiastic but ultimately suspect leadership it became more politically incoherent. Its organisational survival was made possible by tactical agreements with the Left Book Club, whose Groups provided a much sought after distribution/exhibition circuit. But

this organisational dependency was underpinned by prevailing notions of 'cultural harmony'.

The ascendancy of gradualism within the Labour movement had never seriously been challenged, but during the later 1930's, when notions of class struggle lost much credibility, paradoxically the CPGB enjoyed an unprecedented influence within the country for a short period. This was less a testament to the Party's political acumen and more a guide to the adjustments which the Labour movement and other sections of the population were prepared to make in response to the growing danger of fascism. Within this climate notions of a popular front were merely political articulations of a more broadly based closing of ranks. Characteristic therefore of this period, and, it is suggested, unprecedented in British history since the Great War, was a notion of 'cultural harmony' - the belief that there was much common ground amongst people of the the working classes and between them and other classes, even though class and political differences may ultimately separate them. There was of course a strong element of pragmatism within this conjuncture of ideas, but the left of the Labour movement in particular subscribed to, and went beyond, the cultural and campaign work of the Communist Party and its orbital groups.

The Left Book Club was the foremost example of this notion of cultural harmony in practice; and the Film and Photo League survived not merely because of the organisational facilities provided by the Club's Groups, but because of the idea of cultural harmony which made the League's association with the LBC possible. The League collapsed for the same reasons: its own membership grew politically diverse, and the group began to lose its sense of purpose and perspective, and quickly disintegrated, its history sharing, significantly, a similar chronological trajectory to the popular front movement.

Just as the popular front subsided as the Labour movement and the country in general gave critical support to the National Government in the post-Munich period, so the workerism of the Labour movement gave way to a growing sense of national unity. Under these circumstances the League, with no clear political identity or political organisation with which to associate (unlike Kino and the PFI) not only lost its bearings but found that its audiences, real and potential, had disappeared.

Who, it could be asked, wanted to see 'workers' films'? Attempts were made from 1937 to adjust to this crystallising situation, but little was achieved. Kino, by contrast, could rely on its library of documentaries and Soviet features to maintain its custom.

2. Other Film Groups

Finally, there were a number of other groups operating along similar lines to the League, Kino and the Progressive Film Institute. Two about which virtually nothing is known were the Vanguard Film Association and Crescent Films. The latter was established in the autumn of 1938 as the film unit of Unity Theatre, and was intended to complement the theatre workshop available to Unity's remarkable membership, which had risen from 2000 in May 1938 to 7000 in May the following year.(81) The former, set up in the spring of 1936 as a 'workers' film unit', declared as its immediate aim

To make films which by their art and entertainment will bring to those who see them an understanding of the lives and problems of the people. (82)

Established by C.F.Stoneham and Maurice Orbach shortly after the formation of the Workers' Music Association, it was intended that the unit 'would prove of prime importance to Left movements'. Orbach believed that it was 'time for the making of workers' films in this country with the punch and power of Eisenstein'; and production was started, apparently, on two films.(83) Interestingly, the group, of approximately 15 people, intended to produce fictional films, and hoped to provide a library of books on film acting, and training in film technique for studio production.(84) Its first production Tomorrow, Tomorrow, dealt with 'unemployment',(85) but references to the unit in the Daily Worker quickly cease, and nothing further is known of its activities.

Of far more significance, it would appear, was International Sound Films, run by Sime and Ivan Seruya. As early as December 1933, within weeks of Kino's formation, the Seruyas had independently advertised

81. D.Bradby, J.McCormick, People's Theatre op.cit., p.99.

82. Daily Worker, 20 April 1936, p.7.

83. Ibid., 13 April 1936, p.4.

84. Ibid., 20 April 1936, p.7; 15 May 1936, p.6.

85. Ibid., 1 June 1936, p.7.

shows of Kino's films, (86) and continued to do so throughout 1934. Such curiously parallel film work led, in January 1935, to the formation of International Films, which, equally curiously, shared Kino's offices, and Ivan Seruya continued to act as Kino's roving projectionist. Using League funds he launched International Sound Films (ISF) in the autumn of 1936 as 'Specialists in all forms of Film Propaganda', with offices in London and Glasgow. (87) Ivan Seruya's recollection of the enterprise was very hazy, and no documents relating to the company appear to have survived. Occasional items of correspondence in the Cuthbertson Papers reveal that as with Kino, the ISF sought to boost its status and prestige by recruiting prominent personalities to its ranks. ISF's Advisory Council consisted of Aneurin Bevan, Maurice Dobb, Ellen Wilkinson and Stuart Legg, all notable for their left wing or 'progressive' views. Its collection of films extended to at least 22, most of which were of a left wing character. They included Roman Karmen's Abyssinia (Soyuzkinochronika, USSR, 1936), a documentary treatment of the Italian invasion of 1935-6; Sun Yu's The Road to Life (1937) and Tsai Chosheng's The Fishermen's Song (1937), both anti-Japanese features made in Chinese studios; The Dawn (1936), a feature produced by Tom Cooper in the Republic of Ireland on the Irish Republican Army's operations against the British army during the war of independence; Land of Promise (1937) on the settlement of Jewish people in Palestine; Joris Iven's The Spanish Earth and G.W.Pabst's West Front 1918. As with the Progressive Film Institute the ISF acquired material direct from the Spanish Ministry of Public Instruction, notably They Shall Not Pass, 'covering the history of Spanish Democracy from the abdication and flight of Alphonso to the present day', (88) and New Spain (also known as Madrid 1936), compiled in Paris by Luis Bunuel and the French Communist Party at the request of the Spanish Government. (89) The Seruyas also acquired several films from Czechoslovakia, including two features, Hey Rup! (or, Pull Together Boys), a satirical comedy made by R.Messner on cooperative food production and the opposition to it maintained by big business; and The World Belongs to Us, whose theme was the threat to democracy in Czechoslovakia; and a short, Come With Us, on communal life in a Czechoslovakian summer camp. Of the British films in the ISF library the most notable were Enough to Eat?, Housing Problems, and two films produced by the London Cooperative Society, Peace Parade and The People Who Count (both produced in 1937). This collection was supplemented

86. Daily Worker, 29 December 1933, p.4.

87. Labour Organiser, June 1937, p.103; Russia Today, January 1937, p.13.

88. Daily Worker, 2 June 1937, p.5.

89. Francisco Aranda, Luis Bunuel (London, 1975), p.120.

by Spanish Gazette, consisting of footage taken by Ivan Seruya in Spain in 1937. 342

International Sound Films functioned parallel with Kino and the PFI as 'Distributors of Progressive Films to Cinemas and Organisations', handling both 35mm and 16mm sound films, aiming at independent cinemas and, specifically, Labour organisations.(90) Apart from canvassing such organisations, offering a comprehensive hire service, including films, equipment and an operator, ISF conducted tours throughout each summer, and, also like Kino and the PFI, organised its own exhibitions and exhibition-meetings in aid of particular campaigns. A show was given, for example, 'In aid of the Basque children', by ISF at the Phoenix Theatre, Charing Cross, in March 1938, and the films exhibited were New Spain, Spanish Gazette and By Sunny Streams.(91) The group did not however achieve the level of prominence enjoyed by Kino, and by December 1938 the group was struggling, unable to recoup money invested in Czechoslovakia 1938, a film on the Munich Crisis and its aftermath in central Europe. By March the following year it had more or less ceased to operate.(92)

Finally, apart from Glasgow Kino, the only provincial Labour-oriented production group about which there is any information is People's Newreels, a Communist Party group formed in the summer of 1938 in Brighton. The origin and nature of the group is well described by Ernie Trory, one of its members:

The whole idea of making films of Communist Party activities came when a home movie enthusiast joined the Party. He had a non-political friend who was interested in making films about anything and everything and between them (with a little political direction from me as Sussex County Organiser of the Communist Party) these films were made. No one else was involved except by way of contributions to the cost. We called them People's Newsreels because we had to call them something. There was no organisation. (93)

According to Trory it was only in early 1938 that the CPGB began to establish itself in Sussex, and during that year the District organisation held a series of rallies, demonstrations and meetings to 'put the

90. Daily Worker, 8 September 1938, p.4; Labour Organiser, June 1937, p.119.

91. Daily Worker, 12 March 1938, p.6.

92. BFI, FPL (3), Brotmacher to Cuthbertson, 4 December 1938; FPL (2), I. Seruya to Cuthbertson, 8 March 1939.

Party on the map'.(94) These efforts coincided with renewed attempts by the Party nationally to mobilise the Labour movement in opposition to the National Government. In Sussex Trory and his comrades appear to have had a less utilitarian approach to political work than communists in other districts, and regularly supplemented public meetings and demonstrations with dramatic performances and film shows, including exhibitions of many Soviet productions such as Youth, Storm Over Asia and If War Should Come.(95) Two of the most successful of these publicity events were two 'Sussex People's Marches of History' through Brighton in August and November 1938, both of which were filmed by People's Newsreels using two 9.5mm hand-held cameras. Footage of the first of these events was combined with some showing the 21st anniversary celebrations in Brighton in November of the founding of the Soviet Union, and of the return the following month of members of the International Brigade, including a march through Brighton in honour of fallen comrades. Poorly cut and over exposed, the six-minute silent film was titled People's Scrapbook 1938 and shown regularly by Trory at political meetings or as part of film show entertainment, together with a copy of the Daily Worker Trailer and various Soviet films.

A second film was made, Sussex 1939, covering similar events. Although the surviving copy, lasting ten-minutes, contains footage shot as late as August 1939, it was actually shown early in February that year and was continually extended as further items were shot.(96) When first screened Sussex 1939 contained two items: the printing of The Party Voice, a local broadsheet, and the 'Brighton Unemployed demand Work' march of January 4th - which shows people holding up traffic and the arrest of one of their number. Shortly afterwards footage of the Second Sussex People's Congress of the CPGB was added, showing the gathering listening to Trory deliver his report, part of which is scanned by the camera. The May Day celebrations in Hastings, two items on Labour Party officials joining the CPGB, and footage of the Sussex People's March of History in Eastbourne in August were gradually added to the reel, the latter item featuring both Trory and Isabel Brown

93. E.Trory, in a letter to the author, 1 October 1977.

94. E.Trory, Between the Wars: Recollections of a Communist Organiser (Brighton, 1974), pp.114 ff.

95. Ibid., pp.117, 132-6.

96. Ibid., pp.126, 131, 135-6, 154-5.

addressing a meeting on the beach. The film ends with an appeal: 'Help us to show more films of working class activity in Sussex. Send a donation to 9-11 'St.George's Mews'.

Just as there was no organisation, no substantive political discussion preceded the decisions to film these events: People's Newsreels was drawn automatically to the most accessible of events considered appropriate for the audiences to which they were to be addressed - party workers, sympathisers and left wing audiences generally. These films, while possessing a certain propaganda value, used, as Trory put it, 'as a method of advertisement for our movement', (97) have little agitational value in so far as no attempt is made through titles or the intercutting of images to put forward a particular argument or viewpoint. They simply 'record' certain events as news items of interest to left wing audiences. This lack of political involvement within the frame of the film, combined with the limitations of using 9.5mm cameras, creates the impression that People's Newsreels' approach to film was heavily informed by an 'home movie' enthusiasm for cinematography, and indeed this is substantiated by Trory's own comments quoted earlier. The film was however shown in Sussex in conjunction with Peace and Plenty, a film with strong agitational qualities. It is interesting to note here that neither Ivor Montagu, Bill Megarry nor Ralph Bond could recall the group, and all three were unaware of its productions; and Trory knew nothing of the Film and Photo League. So there were evidently few connections between People's Newsreels and the groups of film technicians, film-makers and distributors based in London. Trory merely made use of Kino's library of Soviet material for local propaganda work, and was evidently uninfluenced by Kino's or FPL's attempts to build a network of local Labour film bodies.

97. E.Trory, Between the Wars op.cit., p.128.

Chapter Eight: Film and Social Democratic Organisations:
the Cooperative Movement

The development of the use of film by the social democratic sections of the Labour movement was on the whole very slow. While quick to recognise the importance of visual media for political purposes they were, under prolonged financial difficulties, reluctant to invest the relatively large amounts of capital needed in dubious projects which could quickly be made redundant by events, and considered exhibition facilities wholly inadequate should such production be arranged. Pre-occupied conceptually with the printed and the spoken word, these organisations were prompted into considering the use of film by a combination of remarkable enthusiasm on the part of a small number of individuals, the specific political needs of the Labour movement in the late 1930's, and the mythology which had evolved appertaining to the propagandistic qualities of film itself. Notwithstanding the early interest of the second Labour Government in the Masses Stage and Film Guild, and in the use of the commercial newsreel for publicity puposes, it was sections of the cooperative movement which led the field in attempts to use film politically within social democratic organisations.

This chapter is concerned with the use of film for political purposes by the cooperative movement. Although the records of many cooperative organisations survive, little information of a detailed character is available concerning film activities. The records of the London Cooperative Society and the Cooperative Union have been used. The records of the Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society and the National Association of Cooperative Education Committees do not exist; and there is little of relevance in the records of the Cooperative Wholesale Society. The central characters involved in these developments died long ago, and appear to have left no papers of relevance. Gladys Reeves, widow of Joseph Reeves, the principal figure in this work, was unable to provide much information relating to the pre-war period. The films which survive are of course a major source of information in themselves, and the National Film Archive and the North West Film Archive have been very useful, but their collections are by no means complete. It should be stressed therefore that any conclusions drawn can only be regarded as tentative.

The cooperative movement consisted of a myriad of organisations. But at the national level the main bodies were the Cooperative Union, the Cooperative Wholesale Society and the Cooperative Party. The Party represented the interests of the movement in parliament. It had, by 1935, an affiliated membership of over 5 million; nine MPs between 1929-31, one between 1931 and 1935, and nine between 1935 and 1939.(1) The Cooperative Union was the central organisation of the movement, coordinating the activities of all other sections. Overall policy was decided by the annual Cooperative Union Congress, at which all sections of the movement were represented, and during which the Central Executive Committee of the Cooperative Union was elected. In the interval between each Congress, the Central Executive was responsible for implementing the decisions taken at the Congress. But a National Cooperative Authority, representing the main national organisations, would meet and decide policy on any matters arising during this interval which had not been decided upon by the Congress. The Cooperative Wholesale Society was the national organisation representing and supplying all local cooperative wholesale societies in Britain. By 1938 the CWS was a vast productive enterprise which owned 182 factories, employed over 46,000 people, and produced goods to the amount of £43 million.(2) The CWS therefore provided the economic foundation of the movement. Individual cooperative wholesale societies were established and administered by combinations of local cooperative retail societies, and the CWS provided these societies with goods via wholesale depots, at reduced prices. The retail society was the fundamental unit of the cooperative movement, drawing people into cooperation through individual membership, and providing the financial means for establishing wholesale societies. In 1928 retail societies in Britain numbered 1245, with their total number of individual members reaching 5,885,135; and by 1939 this latter figure had gradually risen to 8,643,233.(3) Far outstripping the trade

1. A.Bonner, British Cooperation rev.ed.(Manchester, 1970), p.194.
2. Ibid., p.170.
3. J.A.Hough, 'A Guide to Cooperative Statistics', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, vol.113, 1950, Table 1, p.240.

union membership, these figures alone suggest the importance of the cooperative movement for any discussion of the Labour movement as a whole in this period.(4) Of the largest retail societies three were London-based; and two of these, the Royal Arsenal CS and the London CS, were the leading forces behind the political use of film.

1. The Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society, the London Cooperative Society and the National Association of Cooperative Education Committees

(i)

The Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society (RACS), with a membership of 362,110 in 1937, was an outstanding political force in the cooperative movement. The only major cooperative society to affiliate to the Labour Party (in 1921) it commanded a formidable political status throughout South London as an active and vigorous organisation, fully supporting the Labour Party platform and becoming involved in its campaigns.(5) The RACS Education Department, consisting of individual members of the Labour Party and trade unionists, was prominent in this political work.(6) Devoting considerable resources to its activities, (representative were figures for 1932, £17,255, and for 1937, £18,792), it built up an impressive educational record, including the founding of the Woodcraft Folk, and the development of class work in conjunction with the London County Council, the Workers' Educational Association, the National Council of Labour Colleges and the Marx Memorial Library; and it organised extensive cultural activities.(7) A 'major educational enterprise', the RACS Education Department was also a pioneer in the

4. Trade union membership reached 4,806,000 in 1928, and 6,298,000 in 1939. British Labour Statistics Historical Abstract 1886-1968 (London, 1971), Table 196.
5. A measure of the RAC's independence from the cooperative movement, which was on the whole a reluctant political force, is the support which it gave to the Labour Party in opposition to the United Peace Alliance of all political tendencies against the National Government, which, launched by Reynolds News, the cooperative Sunday paper, received wide support for a limited period from national cooperative bodies.
6. J.Attfield, 'The Educational Work of the Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society 1918-1940', a paper delivered to a conference of the History of Education Society, December 1977.
7. RACS, Report and Balance Sheet, Year Ended January 1933, p.12. (Hereafter, 'Report'.) J.Attfield, op.cit. The Woodcraft Folk was a movement of cooperative youth organisations, established in the mid-1920's.

educational and political use of film, under the guidance and enthusiasm of its Secretary (from 1918 to 1938) Joseph Reeves. Attfield considers that Reeves was a 'towering figure' in inter-war cooperative education circles'. A contemporary view, commenting on his departure from the RACS to become the Manager of the Workers' Film Association, concurs in this judgment: 'Mr. Reeves was probably the most outstanding figure in the world of cooperative education'.(8) In so far as film is concerned, he was probably the outstanding personality in the evolution of a film service for the social democratic sections of the Labour movement.

Reeves, a committed socialist, general election candidate in 1931 and 1935, and staunch supporter of the Soviet Union (he made at least three visits in the inter-war period), believed that formal state education was a cornerstone of the capitalist system and, though there was room for improvements within its structures, considered that it was essential to combat its ultimate influence by independent education in the principles of cooperation. His was a dynamic conception of independent working class education - one which believed in its centrality to processes of social change. Cooperative education was envisaged as making 'a frontal attack ... upon capitalist institutions in the realm of ideas' and mobilising people to participate 'in bringing about a new social order'.(9) There was clearly a distinct political character to this education which, informed by a militant, anti-capitalist pacifism, was intended, as Reeves explained;

to create a consciousness among members of the vital role Cooperation plays in a changing world. We can, if we will, make a deliberate contribution to an order of society wherein the means of plenty for all will not be frustrated by an out-moded system of distribution.... We must place the full weight of our organisation behind the new forces at work in society making for the overthrow of those who live by the sword, and who wax fat on greed and injustice. (10)

However, the role of the RACS Education Department was not merely conceived in educational-political terms. It performed a consciously distinct political role as an essential part of its operations, becoming

8. J. Attfield, op.cit.; Cooperative News, 3 September 1938, p.7.
9. J. Reeves, Education for Social Change (Manchester, 1936), pp.8, 13; see Cooperation and the New Social Order (London, 1932).
10. RACS, Report, 1938, p.11.

involved in the broad sweep of Labour Party activities. As Attfield observes,

The RACS Education Department played a full part in many of the political campaigns run by the cooperative and Labour movements in the 1930's. (11)

A pioneer in the use of film for educational purposes, (12) Reeves quickly realised the value of the medium as a vehicle for political education and propaganda. With the arrival of Soviet films in Britain, and the opening of Tooting Cooperative Hall fully equipped and licensed for film exhibition, he arranged several film exhibitions in conjunction with the London Workers' Film Society. In February 1931 two films hired through Atlas Films, The General Line (USSR, 1929) and The Shadow of the Mine (Germany 1924) were used by the Department to celebrate the spirit and publicise the principles of cooperation.(13) Apart from the occasional exhibition little further is known about such film work: presumably the paucity of Soviet films in 1932 restricted such activity. With the arrival of Kino in November 1933 as a distributor of Soviet films on 16mm non-inflammable film stock, the situation improved.

Emphasising the importance of cultural work(14) Reeves finally persuaded the Education Department to try and attract greater audiences to its activities by purchasing 16mm film projection equipment and organising a regular programme of 'specially selected films'. The demand for shows was so great that within two months 33 performances were arranged, prompting the Department to buy from Kino a copy of The General Line the same month it was made available in Britain in 16mm form.(15)

11. J.Attfield, op.cit. Comradeship, the Department's monthly journal, edited by Reeves and with a peak circulation of nearly 20,000 in the late 1930's, was an important political forum for the left of the Labour Party, attracting many of the leading Socialists of the day to its pages.
12. As early as 1920 Reeves gave film shows 'of an educational nature' (but also including 'a few westerns') to children in Woolwich; and from 1922 the RACS Education Department regularly showed films to children 'for purposes of counteracting the effect of the sensational film', and junior and adult classes were arranged in conjunction with Mary Fields of British Instructional Films. Gladys Reeves, in letters to the author, 7 March, 21 April 1978; J.Reeves, The Film and Education (Stoke, 1937), pp.6-7.
13. Comradeship, April 1931. The Soviet film was specifically concerned with encouraging cooperation amongst the Russian peasantry. The German film, considered of 'special importance for cooperators', was a curious choice, and the reviewer here recognised that it had little propaganda value for the type of showings it would receive under

The film was subsequently shown, according to Reeves, on over 100 occasions to local cooperative audiences, numbering approximately 40,000 people.(16) These shows were supplemented by the exhibition of British Instructional Films' productions, material from the Kodak Library, and actuality shorts which the Education Department itself produced on various cooperative events.

As Kino built up its collection Reeves hired several Soviet and other films in an attempt to introduce a more political character to these shows. Kameradschaft (1931) was given six special performances in November 1935; and a copy of Battleship Potemkin, hired for six months, was screened at thirty meetings.(17) During 1936 the RACS Education Committee

concentrated upon the important task of widening the scope of their appeal so that the advantages of democracy in all fields of life may be made known. By the exhibition of silent and sound films, by the launching of popular lecture courses, and by the distribution of literature, they have endeavoured to contribute to the enlightenment of both members and non-members. (18)

While attaching no particular prominence to film in this task of enlightenment, it was eminently suited to 'widening the scope of their appeal', and was employed as an integral part of these activities. In the peace campaign, for example, films were regularly screened at meetings, and over forty silent film shows alone were given. Although the films shown may not have had any impact on those attending, the Committee was well pleased with their drawing power, reporting that meetings were 'well attended' and the shows 'very much appreciated'.(19)

RACS auspices. This would suggest perhaps that a mythology of 'workers' films' had already gained sufficient momentum to overcome any doubts concerning 'relevance'.

14. See, for example, J.Reeves, Education for Social Change op.cit., pp. 21-26.
15. RACS, Report, 1934, p.11.
16. Kino News, Winter 1935; J.Reeves, The Film and Education op.cit., p.8.
17. Comradeship, January 1936; RACS, Report, 1936, p.11.
18. RACS, Report, 1937, p.11.
19. Ibid, The sound films shown included The Doomed Battalion, Peace or War, The Pacific Problem, Peace of Britain and Thunder in the Air.

In 1937 the RACS began to use sound films systematically as part of its activities, 'as a medium of education and propaganda', arranging in conjunction with the London Cooperative Society the exhibition of no less than 150 different films in the winter of 1937-8 to audiences which ranged from forty to six hundred. In late 1937 the RACS embarked on production with a film Workers' Education, which illustrated the various educational activities of the Society's Education Committee.(20) A second film, Educate and Liberate (also known as Workers' Education) was released in 1939. This was a ten-minute film with a commentary by Joseph Reeves, publicising the educational work of the Society. The Society also commissioned People with a Purpose, allocating £1200 to the Realist Film Unit for its production, to celebrate sixty years of educational work. The film, released in October 1939, was produced by Ralph Bond.(21)

(ii)

The London Cooperative Society was also keen to use film, and in July 1937 established a Film Department under the auspices of its Political Committee, with Frank Cox as its head. The Committee provided £1,500 for the production of three films for 'publicity and propaganda' over an experimental twelve month period.(22) Cox, an expert in sound recording with long experience in cinematography, was a well known political activist and a former member of the Film and Photo League. He believed fundamentally that the cinema industry and the capitalist State 'purposely' used the cinema as a 'soporific' 'to keep the masses satisfied with their lot in life'. He argued, during the course of the discussion within the cooperative movement on the formation and function of a national film service, that it was essential not to leave 'this weapon almost entirely in the hands of our enemies', the 'capitalists'. The cinema, he argued, 'could be used for election propaganda or trading purposes'; but it was essential for its success that the cooperative movement avoid using capitalist methods of film production, and develop new forms and methods.(23) Under Cox's guidance the LCS Film Department

20. RACS, Report, 1938, p.11; The Cooperators' Year Book, 1938, p.69. The film cost under £25 to produce.
21. Cooperative News, 22 July 1939, p.6; TUC Library, Workers Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association, Annual Report and Balance Sheet for the Year Ended September 30th 1939. (Hereafter, 'Annual Report'.)
22. London³ Cooperative Society Library, London Cooperative Society Committee Minutes, Political Committee Minutes, 2 February, 18 May, 1 June 1937. (Hereafter London Cooperative Society, 'LCSCM'.)

produced two sound films in 1937: Peace Parade, a twelve-minute actuality film recording the Cooperative Party's Peace Demonstration in Hyde Park on 19 September, in which, it was estimated, 7,000 people took part; and People Who Count, a twenty minute-film descriptive of the aims and various activities of the movement, with a strong political statement by A.V.Alexander, the Cooperative movement's most prominent MP. Both films were produced by Pelly and Healey, a small independent production company, in conjunction with the Film Department, and were released in October 1937. Trouble in Utopia was released in March 1938. It was a twenty-minute sound feature film, heralded as the first non-standard sound film to be made by the professional method of direct sound recording.(24) The success of these productions convinced the LCS of the desirability of continuing the project and further allocations in March and December 1938 of £1500 and £2000 were made.(25) Between March 1938 and October the following year, six films were produced. The first, Wembley Pageant, was an actuality record of the Cooperative Pageant held at Wembley in June 1938. The Pageant was a celebration of the movement and its ideals, and a spectacular event in the cooperative calendar. Using six cameramen and a crew of fourteen with Cox as director, a 16mm colour film with synchronised sound recording was produced. The film was considered in cooperative circles 'an achievement' and was circulated throughout the country.(26) A New Recruit, billed as a 'thrilling story of the struggle for political power in a small country town', and released in May, was a fictionalised documentary focussing on local government elections. Stressing the importance of electoral participation it discussed the dangers of political apathy in the presence of a 'villainous' Conservative Party.(27) A forty-minute sound

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23. F.Cox, 'A National Cooperative Film Society', Millgate, October 1936 - March 1937, pp.39-40. It is unclear of what these new forms and methods were to consist.
24. F.Cox, 'Experts Said It Could Not Be Done', Cooperative News, 5 November 1938, p.8, in which he explains the technical ramifications of the achievement. For a brief description of the film, see ibid., 5 February 1938, p.3. It was later advertised as 'A satire on the uses to which man puts the bounties of nature.' and 'an entertaining skit upon the Tory point of view about slums, housing, malnutrition and rearmament'.
25. London Cooperative Society Library, LCSCM, Political Committee Minutes, 1 March, 6 December 1938.
26. Cooperative News, 9 July 1938, p.3; 27 May 1939, p.7. For details of the content of the film, see ibid., 17 September 1938, p.5.
27. Ibid., 20 May 1939, p.5; TUC Library, Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association, Film Catalogue, n.d., c.1943.

production, this was probably the most ambitious film made by this Film Unit before the war, though final judgement is impossible, since there is no copy extant. Released almost simultaneously, were a batch of shorter productions pursuing similar themes. Each for All, a twenty-minute colour film, was billed variously as 'The bee shows man how to cooperate', or 'socialist organisation in a beehive', and appears to have been an attempt to discuss the practical application of socialist principles to the organisation of work and production. The Awakening of Christopher Cole (twenty minutes) was descriptive of 'socialist relationships' in a 'property sharing world'; and Potter's Clay (twenty minutes) was billed variously as 'events leading to war and aftermath', or 'the child as clay in the hands of its parents and teachers'.(28) Finally, The Story of Czechoslovakia, a twenty minute anti-nazi propaganda film produced by Frank Cox, directed by Jiri Weiss, a Czech emigré, and with a commentary by Basil Wright. The film was released in October 1939. 1939.(29)

(iii)

The RACS's film work was a distinct success, as was that of the LCS. However, Reeves complained in 1937 that 'We still find it difficult to obtain films which serve our purpose...'(30) At his initiative therefore, and commensurate with the Ten Year Plan of Cooperative Education, which, inaugurated by the cooperative movement in 1936, was ambitiously intended to lay the ideological foundations for a radical transformation in Britain's social and economic organisation, the RACS arranged with the National Association of Cooperative Education Committees (NACEC) to form a National Cooperative Film Society to distribute and produce films for the movement to rectify this deficiency.(31) The project was presented for discussion by Reeves at a National Film Conference arranged by the NACEC in early September 1936.(32) The scheme,

28. Cooperative News, 9 June 1939, p.10; TUC Library, Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association, Film Catalogue, n.d., c.1943, provide details of these films.
29. For brief details, see Cooperative News, 14 October 1939, p.3; 2 December 1939, p.3.
30. RACS, Report, 1937, p.11.
31. Ibid., p.
32. The text of the proposals made by Reeves was published in the form of a pamphlet, The Film and Education op.cit.

rejecting suggestions that the cooperative movement should enter the film industry as a competitor of the established film companies, proposed firstly that a National Cooperative Film Society be formed under the auspices of the NACEC, to be funded by a share-issue to individual cooperative societies. Reeves appealed for fifty societies to pledge £10 each to launch the scheme, and for them to form a circuit of cooperatives willing to take a programme of films once every week for twenty-six weeks. While recognising that it would be initially quite difficult to provide a weekly change of films for six months, Reeves was confident that the libraries of Kino, British Instructional Films, the General Post Office and other repositories of documentary and educational films were expanding at a rate sufficient to provide a regular flow of new material. A good programme of sound films, costing between £3 and £5, was envisaged as consisting of 'educational, topical, humorous, documentary and interest films'. Secondly, that cooperative education committees should instal 16mm sound equipment as the most suitable for the type of educational work undertaken; and that this equipment, estimated as costing under £200, be purchased, or bought on a system of hire purchase, from the National Cooperative Film Society (NCFS). Recognising the problems created by the technical aspects of exhibition, and the general lack of expertise, the scheme envisaged the NCFS as providing a central organisation for the supply of films, equipment and advice. Programmes of films were to be despatched to regional circuits, but where societies could not afford to buy or hire equipment, roadshows would provide single programmes of films with equipment and operator and a programme of films lasting two hours, for an inclusive charge of £6 - £8 per show. Finally, anticipating a substantial growth rate for the scheme, Reeves proposed that as the demand for films and the revenue of the Society grew, it would be in a position to undertake the production of film propaganda.(33)

The NACEC and the RACS jointly set up a film committee in the wake of the favourable reception of these proposals, under Reeves' secretaryship, to make the preliminary arrangements for the scheme. The initial appeal to the NACEC's 280 affiliated groups attracted over 100 affirmative replies - yet of these only 37 were prepared to subscribe the requisite £10. The fundamental difficulty, according to Reeves, was the cost of projection equipment and the Committee subsequently offered to societies hire purchase arrangements for equipment, originally

33. J.Reeves, The Film and Education op.cit., pp.9-19; Cooperative Union Congress, 1937, p.461.

priced at £200, at a specially reduced price of £130.(34) By July 1937 the first regional circuit was formed, in the Scunthorpe/Lincoln/Grimsby area; and at the end of September, having secured the support of over fifty societies, the Film Department of the NACEC (as it became known), started operations, based at the Cooperative Institute in Woolwich, the home of the RACS.

There was clearly some considerable interest within the cooperative movement in the scheme. Within the first four weeks of operation the Department gave over 200 exhibitions in the form of road-shows; and by the end of the year had given approximately 200 exhibitions throughout the country. By early the following year, 400 shows, and by June, over 600. Its programmes consisted of mainly documentary, educational or political films, including Enough to Eat?, Changes in the Franchise, Heredity, Shipyard, Night Mail, Man of Aran, Jew Süss, Kameradschaft, News From Spain, War is Hell, with a mix of musical, comedy, travel and feature films to provide entertainment and thereby maximise audiences.(35) Individual societies responded to the scheme by purchasing equipment from the Department (at least nine had done so by the end of 1937), and by the formation of film societies. Walsall CS, for example, had formed its own film group as early as March 1937 to show films 'not usually seen in public cinemas', to hold lectures and discussions, and

to produce films illustrative of working class life generally, and in particular of suitable propaganda films on behalf of the cooperative movement. (36)

Such was the interest in the NACEC's Film Department that, though starting with a capital of £500, it was found unnecessary after six months to use this fund, as running costs were met by profits made in supplying societies with programmes of films, equipment, and in acting as agent procuring such equipment. Within three months a profit of £300 had been made, and over the first six months a trading turnover in excess of £2000 was achieved; and at least twenty cooperatives had acquired sound projectors in this period.(37)

34. Cooperative News, 3 April 1937, p.15.

35. Ibid., 30 October 1937, p.5; 8 January 1938, p.10; The Cooperators' Year Book, 1938, pp.68-9; Cooperative Union Congress, 1937, p.461; Cooperative Union Congress, 1938, p.533. The potential audience for such meetings was considerable. The NACEC had 280 societies affiliated to it in 1937, and 311 in 1939, the latter figure representing no less than six million cooperators. Cooperative News, 3 April 1937, p.15; 8 April 1939, p.5.

By October 1938 the NACEC Film Department was competing with the Workers' Film Association (WFA), the film agency of the Labour Party and the TUC, run by Reeves. Nevertheless, in the eight months from October 1938 to May 1939, it achieved a trading turnover of £1748, (compared with £2363 for the WFA over the same period), and for the trading year, its turnover was again in excess of £2000.(38) Unfortunately there is little direct evidence to indicate the nature of the transactions involved: whether film hire was more common than the roadshow; whether the films most in demand were those supplied by the commercial libraries and the GPO Film Library, or were productions of the cooperative movement and the material from Kino, etc.; or, indeed, in the case of cooperative productions, whether trading and publicity shorts produced by the Cooperative Wholesale Society (CWS) were in greater demand than the more educational/political films produced by the London societies. A report given to the NACEC conference on film in April 1939 revealed that roadshows were decreasing due to the rapid increase in cooperative societies possessing their own projection equipment; and that the Department, in extending its own collection of 'propaganda' films, was becoming increasingly less reliant on films from the commercial libraries - the implication being that the preference of societies was for documentary and 'propaganda' material.(39) This inference is supported by the hostile attitude of the CWS towards the NACEC Film Department, which had led to the former's refusal to allow the latter to include CWS publicity shorts in its programmes. This attitude was maintained from the Department's inception to at least mid-1938, and probably until early 1939. Film programmes therefore were unlikely to include many, if any, CWS productions during the 1938-9 year, thereby affecting the balance

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36. Cooperative News, 13 March 1937, p.13. It was reported that 65 people were present at the society's first meeting. Other film societies formed in the wake of the NACEC scheme included Long Eaton, Kettering, Stockton and Leicester, the latter frequently producing newsreel and fictional films 'for propaganda purposes'. Ibid., 4 December 1937, p.5.
37. LPNEC, National Joint Film Committee Minutes, 24 March 1938, 'National Film Service'. However, this rate of response was not maintained. By January 1939 only 25 societies 'and a number of Trade Unions' had purchased projectors. Labour Press Service, no.1021, 18 January 1939, Supplement.
38. TUC Library, TUC GC, National Joint Film Committee Minutes, 17 June 1940; Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association, Annual Report, 1939.
39. Cooperative News, 15 April 1939, p.6.

of programmes offered in favour of cooperative propaganda material, in so far as every show would have been considered an opportunity to give publicity to some aspect of cooperative activity. Finally, most organisations which hired material from the NACEC film library probably preferred to arrange occasional rather than regular weekly, or highly frequent, exhibitions, if only because of the relatively large amount of capital required to purchase equipment, which in turn could only be justified by a substantial audience 'potential' - even though there was a popular conviction that films attracted more people to meetings. What evidence there is partially substantiates this. The first annual report of the Workers' Film Association reveals that 'the great proportion' of the Film Department's turnover for the 1938-9 year 'has been derived from film hire' - rather than sales of equipment.(40) If the pattern of film hire experienced by the WFA was representative of the film hire generally within the Labour movement, then custom was spread fairly evenly, covering a large number of groups, there being few which hired material with a high degree of frequency. If this is so, then the NACEC's customers were probably a mix of those societies conforming to the original scheme of taking weekly programmes, and others taking material on an irregular basis. No firm conclusions can be drawn, but it would seem that a large number of local groups (not just cooperative societies) must have had at least irregular access to projection equipment, even though only 25 cooperative societies had their own by January 1939. As film hire was the main source of revenue, therefore a highly tentative impression of the demands made on the Department can be suggested.

If we assume that, for the first eight months of the 1938-9 trading year (41) only half of its turnover was derived from film hire, and that this was all revenue (film hire expenditure plus trade in

40. TUC Library, Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association, Annual Report, 1939.

41. The figures for the eight month period are reliable: the turnover for the whole year is referred to only as 'over £2000'. They also give a more accurate indication of the level of film hire: film shows during the summer months were less popular both inside and outside the commercial cinema in comparison with the rest of the year.

equipment making up the remainder), with an average two hour programme costing £6 15s, approximately 130 programmes would have been hired from the Department - a rough average of four programmes per week, and probably therefore of four groups hiring films each week. While by no means roaring trade this suggests a body of support for the scheme. Moreover, organisations appear to have been encouraged not simply to hire programmes of films for single shows, but to book them for periods of seven days, giving up to six shows for each hiring. The correlation therefore between hiring and showing films is indeterminate, preventing the quantification of exhibitions of this type, but offering the speculation that in any one week something in the region of twenty exhibitions could have been given from the NACEC film library.

Given the limited resources of the Film Department, the level of film hire, the ability from its inception to run on the profits made, and that such films as Advance Democracy were in 'constant circulation', (42) it would appear that as a service to both the cooperative and the wider Labour movement, the scheme was relatively successful. Indeed, its immediate success was the occasion for the Labour Party and the TUC to finally approve the formation of a film agency for the whole of the Labour movement, after seventeen years of hesitation. Similarly it provided encouragement to Reeves and other members of the Department who were anxious to secure commissions for the production of cooperative films for the political and educational elaboration of the cooperative point of view. The four London societies, Royal Arsenal, London, South Suburban and Enfield Highway agreed in November 1937 to Reeves' suggestion (made in June that year, before the NACEC scheme had started) to collectively provide £1000 each year for five years to fund the production of 'five documentary social films on cooperation'. (43)

In the space of three months the cooperative movement had established a film distribution agency and launched two programmes of production to supply this service with suitable films. These developments were quite remarkable in so far as the movement as a whole was

42. Cooperative News, 15 April 1939, p.6.

43. Ibid., 27 November 1937, p.2; RACS, Report, 1938, p.11.

politically less developed than the rest of the Labour movement, and distinctly reluctant to assume a political profile. In recognising this widespread political backwardness members of the political leadership of the cooperative movement devised this film service, heavily sponsored by a vision of the role cooperation could perform in achieving further social and political progress, and tapping deeply rooted working class traditions of education, community and culture. A high premium was therefore placed on political education; and subsequent production, largely unrecorded in the history of British film, was fashioned to precisely these utilitarian ends.

(iv)

What was more remarkable however was the five year scheme of joint production of the four London societies, inaugurated in November 1937. With Reeves as technical secretary to the production committee, 'We soon decided', he explained,

that our films to be of value must not deal with narrow and specific problems but with the broad issues of life in which the average man and woman are interested. (44)

The scheme was based on the assumption that,

If we are not satisfied with the films provided by Hollywood the only alternative is to make our own films. If we make our own films they must serve our ends. (45)

Reeves was entrusted with providing an initial scenario for the production company the Realist Film Unit; and 'wanted to illustrate the struggles of the workers to achieve social and economic freedom'.(46) Scripted and directed by Halph Bond the result, a twenty minute sound film titled Advance Democracy and costing £900, was one of the most important political films made by the Labour movement in the 1930's, in the context of its technical proficiency, political message and its usage. Released in October 1938 it 'scored an instant success'. The NACEC's Film Department possessed twelve copies, all of which were in 'constant circulation',

44. Comradeship, October 1938.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid., where Reeves provides a synopsis.

'shown all over the country'.(47) The Workers' Film Association, which commenced operations simultaneously with the film's release, was appointed distributor for the four London Cooperative Societies' Joint Education Committee, thereby securing the film for its own library. The surviving records of the WFA reveal that between November 1938 and September 1939 this film was hired on at least 63 occasions from the Association.(48) It was hired therefore an average of at least once a week between the date of its release and the outbreak of war, from the WFA; and possibly more frequently from the NACEC Film Department. Of those films produced by the Labour movement that are comparable in the broadest sense (professional production, similar level of finance, guaranteed distribution, extensive screening potential, length, target audience, etc.) probably only two films achieved similar usage, Defence of Madrid and Peace and Plenty.

The second film from the Joint Education Committees was Voice of the People. Made by the Realist Film Unit and produced by Ralph Bond, it cost under £1000, and was released in October 1939. Recording the achievements of the Labour movement since the early nineteenth century, the film emphasises the centrality of the cooperative movement to this progress, and its leading role in the gradual transformation of capitalism to a more humane, ordered and egalitarian society.

No other film of a political nature was produced by the cooperative movement before the war. The NACEC Film Department decided to close down for the duration of the war, owing to war conditions, handing over its own films and custom to the WFA so that all film work might be conducted by one representative Labour organisation; the RACS and the Joint Education Committee of the (now five) London cooperatives followed, entrusting their film work to the Association as both agent and producer.

The outstanding character of the cooperative film service was its political purpose. The NACEC and individual cooperative education committees had, acknowledging the threat to social democracy posed by capitalist competition on the one hand, and on the other by fascism, recognised the need to assume an offensive in the realm of ideas to

47. Labour Press Service, no.1034, 26 April 1939.

48. TUC Library, Workers' Film Association Papers, Ledger. The Ledger, a record of all transactions conducted, contains no readily available statistics, and the information there is insufficient to provide a clear impression of their nature. All figures collated from this source are therefore tentative.

mobilise opinion and action not merely in defence of democratic institutions, but to achieve further political advance. As Reeves asserted in 1938,

The need for cooperative education is becoming more and more evident. Cooperation has something more to offer than a mere trading organisation. We must, by our united efforts, endeavour to achieve a new social orderonly an educated cooperative democracy can save world peace. (49)

Some sections of the cooperative movement in the late-1930's became involved in the various peace, anti-fascist and Labour campaigns of those years. The film work of the NACEC and the London cooperatives took place in this context, and had a distinct political basis, focussing on three main areas of activity: in conjunction with relief work for Republican Spain and the opposition to the National Government's non-intervention policy; in the politically-oriented educational work of the cooperative movement; and in the general propagandising of cooperative principles in the wider Labour movement.

In the autumn of 1937 the Cooperative Party and the Cooperative Union launched a 'Milk for Spain' campaign to raise funds to purchase milk through the CWS for immediate shipment to those in need in 'democratic Spain'. The campaign was to be 'the biggest appeal ever made to its millions of members'.(50) With the collaboration of the NACEC Film Department, the Cooperative Union prepared plans 'to put the cinema screen to a widespread use in presenting the Spanish case', arranging 'film shows on a scale never before attempted by the democratic movements'. Undertaking the entire film work for the campaign the Film Department hired four sound films from Kino Films: News from Spain, Madrid Today, The Basque Children and, later, The Spanish Earth. The first three were provided with an appropriate visual introductory commentary by A.V.Alexander.(51) No details on the scope of this film campaign are available, the records of the NACEC not having survived; and there is no information in Cooperative Union records or sources such as Cooperative News.

49. RACS, Report, 1939, p.11.

50. Cooperative News, 20 November 1937, p.2.

51. Ibid., 4 December 1937, p.2; 11 December 1937, p.9. Sufficient copies of these films were hired to enable twelve shows to be given simultaneously. Daily Worker, 8 December 1937, p.3.

The NACEC's film work assumed a more overtly political form in conjunction with the Labour Party. The Party had established its own 'Spain Campaign Committee' in November 1937 to launch a nationwide lobby to compel the Government to abandon the Non-Intervention Agreement and allow the Republican Government to purchase arms from Britain. As part of this campaign local Labour Party organisations were encouraged to show at their meetings the Spanish material distributed by the NACEC Film Department. Characteristically, the initiative however came not from the Labour Party's National Executive Committee, but from Reeves and David Mason (who chaired the committee which ran the Department), who arranged for local cooperative societies to loan projectors to their respective Labour Party organisations, and where this was not possible, for the NACEC to provide roadshow exhibitions.(52) Reeves and Mason were in a position to do this having succeeded in July 1937 in persuading the Labour Party NEC and the TUC General Council that a film service for the whole of the Labour movement was both feasible and urgently necessary. Reeves finally established a Joint Film Committee of these two bodies and the NACEC to organise such a service, which first met in January 1938. Under these arrangements with the NACEC local Party organisations gave over 100 exhibitions within the first two months of the campaign, and by late March had given 160.(53)

Similarly, the RACS participated in special peace campaigns, and shows of political material were arranged regularly at 'educational' meetings.(54) In late 1938 the Education Committee arranged a series of showings at political meetings convened in conjunction with Cooperative Guilds and Labour Parties in a bid to expand its audience, attracting a total of 5000 people, according to one report, within a four month period.(55)

52. For the Spain Committee, see LPAR, 1939, pp.33-4; R.Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism op.cit., pp.255-6. For the use of film in this campaign, see LPNEC, Spain Campaign Committee Minutes, 8 February 1938; ibid., National Joint Film Committee Minutes, 24 March 1938, 'National Film Service'.
53. LPNEC, National Joint Film Committee Minutes, 24 March 1938.
54. J.Reeves, The Film and Education op.cit., p.15; RACS, Report, 1937, p.11.
55. RACS, Report, 1939, p.11. The Committee considered the average attendance far short of expectations.

(v)

The main film output of these sections of the cooperative movement was of a distinctly political character. The three principal productions, People Who Count, Advance Democracy and Voice of the People, used a discussion of the historical importance of the cooperative movement within the context of the struggles of the Labour movement, and an elaboration of the principles of cooperation, to elicit greater support for and involvement within various 'cooperative' activities. These two themes were fused to advocate cooperation as the fundamental basis for the gradual transition from capitalism to an 'enlightened democracy'. These films indicate how these sections of the cooperative movement responded to the particular situation. The following section will discuss the two outstanding cooperative films to be released before the war broke out.

The LCS production People Who Count was intended to publicise the parent society and, more importantly, assert the relevance of cooperative principles in the struggle against reactionary anti-working class capitalism and the war-danger, both of which were seen as threatening social democracy. The film, describing the historic achievements of the cooperative movement, adopted a hostile tone towards this 'enemy'. Visual images, with little camera movement and a reliance entirely on 'realism', are used to underpin A.V. Alexander's commentary, which sets the theme with its opening sequence:

How can a great nation achieve and maintain its greatness?
 What is the key factor which will decide the means of attainment of the universal needs of today: peace and contentment?
 Who are the people who will achieve a higher civilisation than our present civilisation, and how will they do it?

.....

The answer is here, all around us, in the streets, in factories, in offices and shops. These are the people who count. The workers, the wives and the mothers: the people who by their united efforts can and will make our world a better place to live in. This great object can only be obtained by cooperation.

Alexander then discusses the meaning of cooperation, in the context of the 'out-worn system' of capitalism, using the opportunity to criticise one particular form of 'cooperation', employing newsreel footage of Ramsay MacDonald and the National Government:

The word 'cooperation' is open to misuse, and an example of this misuse occurred when, in 1931, certain trusted leaders cooperated with their opponents.

This was not just a swipe at MacDonald and Snowden, but a device intended to tap the vast reservoir of resentment towards the 'betrayal' of 1931 as a means of raising the receptivity of the audience to the fundamentally political message of the film, sharply contrasting cooperation and capitalism and, by implication, suggesting the dangers of class collaboration.

The film then describes the development of cooperation as a response to capitalist exploitation of the working class; and then relates the achievements of the London and Royal Arsenal societies, and the success of their retail stores. To emphasise the contrast between 'cooperation' and 'capitalism' and the benefits (or otherwise) which they bestow, Alexander discusses one particular Hammersmith shop: previously under 'capitalist' ownership and now thriving as a cooperative store. Illustrating the congenial working conditions Alexander puts a direct question to a member of the staff, one who was employed there before the LCS bought the shop.

To make these stores into paying concerns we didn't have to resort to the so-called 'cooperation' between capital and labour, which usually means the general reduction of wages.

.....

How did we do it Miss Harvey? Did we keep your noses to the grindstone from early morning till late at night?

After a glowing account of the workings of the shop, Alexander moves on to discuss more 'people who count' - members of the cooperative movement who volunteer their services to promote their society.

They know what it is they are fighting against, and they know that success will lead to the betterment of their position - will eventually mean the ownership and control of all the means of life.

Emphasising the importance of political participation Alexander urges people to vote. Here he explains the function of much cooperative education work of those years:

In order that he (the citizen) may use his vote intelligently, we have set up machinery for the purpose of enlightening him politically.

.....

The cooperative movement sends members to Parliament.... Such members are in Parliament to defend and retain the rights which we have won in the past, and which are now being threatened by the representatives of those capitalist enterprises which do not wish to see a continuation and increase in the prosperity of working class cooperative efforts.

Following an explanation of the activities of various cooperative organisations, and of the spirit of service of the committee members who run them, Alexander discusses the importance of more people becoming involved in the movement in the light of the deteriorating global situation, emphasising that only through active participation can cooperative ideals be attained. This final section of the monologue is worth quoting at length, revealing the bitterness and hostility prevalent in cooperative circles towards capitalist ideas and institutions.

Selfishness and greed are at the bottom of all poverty and misery. There is no real defence for the continuation of a system which maintains poverty and misery. While a few are content to enjoy wealth in extreme and to hold on to it by every means, the power placed in their hands by the possession of this wealth makes the attainment of our objectives very difficult. In the cooperative movement they recognise an enemy. In times of crisis when 'the Budget needs balancing', [ironical tone] the Gold Standard must be saved, when capitalist interests are threatened, their Press Lords scream at the Coops. What a strange world we live in: money for destruction, thousands of millions forthcoming without a protest, for warships, guns, defence, the people's tax on what they earn, tax on what they eat and drink, and tax on what they do - and the final demand may be death, not only to the soldier, but to women and children. [long pause]

What a strange world we live in. Money for construction, health and saving life, provided by voluntary contributions. A world where the poor pay for their health and small amenities by giving money to charitable institutions, and then have wrung from them the wherewithal to protect the rich man's property. Yes, to their very last.

This is a good world used rightly, with room for all, work and play for all, and food and clothes for all. You who listen to me realise, I am sure, the insanity of man's use of the world today, and yet you do not realise your power to change this. Why not decide now to support a system of equality of ownership, of production for use and not for profit; equality of opportunity for these eight thousand citizens of the future, and their brothers and sisters all over the world regardless of colour or creed. International cooperation, typified by the banners they carry, is the only hope of which we can build our new State. [End: with shots of the Cooperative Party's Peace Demonstration, showing banners - 'Cooperation Means World Peace'.]

Although events were, by the autumn of 1937, beginning to penetrate deeply into the Labour consciousness, People Who Count was produced at a time when Labour was still preoccupied with the domestic situation. The emphases in the film reflect this. The fascist menace is subsumed in somewhat bland references to war, which in turn are subordinate to the hostile condemnation of capitalism, a political view widely held within Labour ranks. (56) The main context of the film was firstly, the striking social and political changes won by the Labour movement over previous decades; secondly, the prevailing sensitivity within cooperative circles to what was considered to be unfair treatment by the State, imposing discriminatory taxes and restrictions which operated to the benefit of its commercial rivals, and to the villifying and declamatory attitude of sections of the press; and thirdly, the contemporary concern for housing, health and nutrition in a period of frenetic social investigation. (57) The film's focal point therefore was social and political progress; its thrust, to publicise cooperation as the indispensable condition of that advance - as the vanguard of the working class in their struggle against capitalism.

Advance Democracy was produced within an entirely different political climate. Though hostility towards capitalism had not subsided, and the welfare of the working class was still a major political issue, international developments had partially, yet decisively, eclipsed

56. E.Pimlott, Labour and the Left in the 1930's (Cambridge, 1977), pp.3-4.
57. For cooperative attitudes to the State see, for example, the Editorial in Cooperative News, 13 February 1937, p.8. For the concern over press attacks on the movement see, for example, Cooperative Union Library, Cooperative Union, Minutes of the Central Executive, Executive Committee Minutes, 17 February 1934; 8 July 1936; ibid., National Cooperative Authority Minutes, 5 December 1935; Cooperative News, 26 June 1937, Supplement. For information on the social inquiries of this period, see J.Stevenson, Social Conditions in Britain Between the Wars (Harmondsworth, 1977), pp.46 ff. The 'visual context' of the film was, of course, the documentary use of the medium as part of this social inquiry, most notably in Housing Problems and Enough to Eat?. See P.Rotha, Documentary Diary op.cit., pp.154-60; E.Barnouw, Documentary: A History of Non-Fiction Film (New York, 1974), pp.90-5.

domestic concerns. Up to the end of 1937 one of the issues posed within the Labour movement was the most effective strategy to be adopted in opposing the National Government's foreign policies. With a view to creating a groundswell of opinion sufficient to influence the direction of Government policy or force an early general election, Labour policy had centred on the attractions or otherwise of a 'united front' — that is to say, a political/electoral alliance of the ILP, the Communist Party, the Labour Party and other Labour organisations. The former two bodies had campaigned vigorously for unity with little success amongst the TUC and the Labour Party. By early 1938 the international situation had deteriorated dramatically, with fascism in the ascendant: the Republicans in Spain had lost much ground; German forces had occupied Austria; Hitler was threatening Czechoslovakia; and invading Japanese forces were rapidly extending their control over key cities in China. In response to these developments the idea of a 'popular front' or a 'united peace alliance' embracing people of all political persuasions who opposed fascism and considered the Government's foreign policies disastrous, was discussed widely within the Labour movement. The purpose behind the 'popular front' was to exert maximum pressure to bring an end to appeasement. Substantial support for this strategy existed within the mainstream of the Labour movement; 120 constituency Labour Parties registered their disapproval, together with left wing Party intellectuals, and even the Cooperative Party endorsed the 'united peace alliance' at its Easter Congress.(58) Short-lived as the momentum was for a 'popular front', it being virtually exhausted by mid-1938, the issue prompted 'the most bitter battle of the decade between Left and Right for the loyalty of Labour's rank and file'.(59) For the most part the Labour Party leadership firmly opposed the strategy, and the NEC, anxious to maintain a tight control over its constituency organisations, even threatened dissenting local Parties with disaffiliation. However, while left sections of the Party and the CPGB, in supporting a 'popular front', advocated a vigorous anti-fascist foreign policy, their opposition to rearmament under the National Government was in direct conflict with many

58. G.D.H.Cole, A History of the Labour Party from 1914 (London, 1948), pp. 352-3; R.Miliband, op.cit., p.257.

59. B.Pimlott, op.cit., pp.5, 147-54.

of the centre and right leaders of the 'popular front' who insisted on the need for immediate rearmament for the required opposition to fascist aggression. The various cross-currents created a confusing situation, and the decision of the Cooperative Congress in June 1938 to reject by a two to one majority a resolution sponsored by the Cooperative Party calling for a 'united peace alliance', dealt a crucial blow to the status of the strategy, and the idea quickly lost support within the mainstream of Labour politics.(60)

It was amid the political flux of these months that Advance Democracy was produced, and the confusions and uncertainties of the period are present in its political message. The film employed various techniques to make it more attractive than the monologue style of People Who Count: fictional format, realistic setting, actuality recording of a particular event of intrinsic interest (it was assumed) to Labour audiences - the 1938 May Day Labour demonstration - and location sequences.

Commencing with a contrast between the life and welfare of the wealthy and the working class, the commentary introduces two members of the latter, Bert and May. Bert is seen working in London's dockland, and at the end of the working day is involved in a casual conversation about war and the international situation, hoping that 'we don't get mixed up in it'. On arriving home Bert switches on the radio:

BBC: Here is the weather. A deep depression is centred over Central Europe, and is rapidly moving westwards.
 Bert: You're telling me.
 BBC: The news copyright reserved. The Prime Minister, replying to questions in the House, said that the international situation was grave. He hoped however that by the exercise of statesmanship, calm and patience -
 Bert: (abruptly switching off the radio:)
 All they can talk about is war - get's on yer nerves.....

The sequence suggests the irritation and nervousness of the ordinary worker regarding the seeming paralysis of the Government in the face of the drift towards war. It also suggests frustration and impatience with the Chamberlain Government's foreign policy. The viewer has already been presented with a picture of Bert as a potential anti-fascist, in a hostile mood, which belies his complacent conversation with his work-mates: on his way home from work he sees posters referring to and showing 'Il Duce',

60. B.Pimlott, op.cit., pp.147-54; G.D.H.Cole, op.cit., pp.353-6.

Chamberlain and Hitler; his facial expression one of contempt, Bert stubs out a cigarette with his boot.

At home May mentions that the war danger had been discussed at the local Women's Cooperative Guild. Bert questions the Guild's worth, and an exchange follows in which May defends the value of the coop. and the 'dividend'. Unimpressed, Bert is persuaded to listen to a broadcast on 'Democracy and the Cooperative Movement' the following evening:

Alright, alright. That means I'll have to fill in me football coupons tonight.....

Bert is next seen returning home from work and turning on the radio, just in time for A.V.Alexander's talk, which focuses on the sacrifices and achievements of the 'workers' movement' over the past one hundred years, detailing the role of the cooperative movement in these struggles and the present scope of cooperative activities. Fictional and actuality sequences are used to illustrate these. Alexander then pauses to take a glass of water, permitting May to interject,

There! What did I tell you! It's worth belonging to isn't it!

and Bert to reply, cautiously,

Mmmm. They haven't done too badly.

The interlude is brief, and with not a little humour, but provides a convenient break, allowing Alexander to launch into a final passage, and the film's main political statement, which is quoted in full.

The cooperative movement remains true to the democratic principles of the Rochdale Pioneers. But today those principles are in danger. Democracy everywhere is threatened. Fascist countries have destroyed every vestige of freedom for their people. Racial persecution has become an integral part of state policy. Their rulers glorify war as the supreme achievement of mankind. Their aeroplanes rain bombs on defenceless civilian populations, massacring men, women and children - destroying whole towns and cities. If democracy is to survive the democrats must assert themselves. If the war policy of the aggressors is to be defeated all friends of peace and freedom must unite. The cooperative movement will play its part in defence of peace, freedom and democracy. WILL YOU ?

During this statement newsreel footage is used depicting scenes of war, Hitler at a military parade, and footage of bomb damage and civilian distress in Republican Madrid. When in view Alexander does not look up from his script, but on completing his penultimate sentence peers into the camera, which moves in for a full close-up, to issue his last words.(61)

While there is no doubt as to the anti-fascist credentials of the message, in the context of the strategic formulae being discussed at the very centre of Labour politics in the first eight months of 1938, the film offers nothing but confusion, merely calling on 'all friends of peace and freedom' to unite and for them to 'assert themselves'. Nevertheless, even this was a considerable step beyond the Labour Party's position, and in marked contrast to the emphases of People Who Count.

In the following sequence, implying that he was inspired to activism by the radio talk, Bert is seen addressing his workmates:

And if the fascists ever get to power it'll be the finish of us. They'll smash our unions. Our wages are low enough. And if that happens they'll be a damn sight lower. Well we won't let it happen 'ere. We must all get together and show them that we're not gonna stand for it.

Bert proposes that they all march in the May Day demonstration; and in reply to a fellow worker querying the value of this says:

It'll do a hell of a lot of good. If we can get a million Londoners to act at a meeting together it'll show that we mean business.

Participation in the march is agreed:

61. It is not without significance that no members of the cooperative movement in the 1930's were given airtime by the BBC to talk on the political importance of their movement. Facilities were provided for discussion, with representatives of non-cooperative commercial organisations, on aspects of retailing; but despite many requests to permit broadcasts on cooperation the BBC refused. It would appear that this film was making an ironical statement on what was considered to be the BBC's political prejudice, though no internal indication of this is given. The device would certainly have not been lost on politically motivated members of the movement.

Tomorrow we march. To defend wages, and our right to work of ours. [sic] To show that we won't tolerate aggression and injustice. Our watchwords: Peace! Freedom! Democracy!

The final sequence of the film focusses entirely on the May Day demonstration. Banners depicting a pageant of workers' history are shown. Sections of the Labour League of Youth, the Young Communist League, the International Brigade, various CPGB branches, Irish Republican groups, the Labour Party and various trade unions are seen; and, all in the same frame, banners depicting Attlee, Leon Blum and Stalin. Camera positions parallel with the marching contingents, above them, and in front of them (mounted on a van) provide good shots of the demonstration; and there is a brisk piece of editing of shots of the marchers in time with the accompanying socialist choral music, finishing with a staged sequence, again in rhythm with the music, emphasising the presence of people from all classes and occupations in a broad anti-fascist alliance.

The 'line' of the film corresponds to that of the 'united peace alliance' launched by Reynolds News, the cooperative Sunday paper, and supported by the Cooperative Party. The film is clearly aimed at non-cooperators as much if not more than members of the cooperative movement, urging a combination of all democrats and 'lovers of peace' to act in defence of democracy. The burden of responsibility for transforming this defence into a progressive political movement is placed on 'cooperation' - only by adopting the principles of cooperation can democracy develop. While not neglecting the working class/capitalism conflict central to People Who Count, the film minimises this, emphasising rather the explicit dangers to the traditions and achievements of the Labour movement presented by fascism. The film's main concern, and this is the central significance of Advance Democracy, is to intervene in the debates within the Labour movement as to the correct strategy to be adopted with regard to resisting fascism, proposing a strategy which was contrary to that put forward by the Labour Party.⁽⁶²⁾ No criticism of the National Government is apparent (in contrast to the earlier film). Amid the confusion and agonising of the months of 1938 the film urged unity, but only in opposition to fascism. There was, as with the Labour Party, little guidance to political action beyond encouragement to mere activism. No suggestion is made as to the relation between unity

62. Reeves, who wrote the original scenario for the film, expressed in an Editorial in Comradeship, July 1938, his full support for the United Peace Alliance; and Ralph Bond, a member of the Communist

and the defeat of the 'aggressors', relying merely on urging people to join in demonstrations and to 'show that we mean business'.

Advance Democracy is very much a product of Labour politics in Britain in 1938, reflecting the confusions and evasions which characterise them. (In advocating a 'popular front' was it 'for' or 'against' National Government rearmament?) Despite its weaknesses, it is an important film precisely because of its intervention in these vital issues. Curiously, released a week after the Munich crisis, it was exhibited in markedly different circumstances from the period of its production. Although Labour leaders had considered that an electoral pact with dissenting Conservatives was desirable should there be a substantial anti-Chamberlain rebellion, the idea of a 'popular front' was summarily rejected, as Sir Stafford Cripps discovered to his cost in early 1939, expelled from the Party for his attempt to organise a new 'popular front' with support in the Labour Party ranks.⁽⁶³⁾ The post-Munich situation in which Advance Democracy was exhibited was, within the Labour movement, politically less confused. There was a more clearly defined polarisation between those who supported the Labour Party leadership and its devotion to an electorally-oriented campaign against the Government — one which precluded alliances with far-left groupings, and 'popular fronters'. While many divisional Labour Parties sympathised with Cripps' National Petition, Party Headquarters was exercising considerable pressure in organising pre-election campaign work, leaving little room for manoeuvre in a political competition for very high stakes: victory could bring socialist construction, defeat — possibly electoral irrelevance. Aligning firmly with the Labour Party, the Cooperative Union and the Cooperative Party were similarly opposed to a broad political alignment, although it is unclear whether or not this accurately reflected the position of individual cooperative societies.

The film was, judging by the commentary, aimed mainly at audiences constituted either as cooperators, or as members of or sympathisers with the Labour Party. The Cooperative Party and the Labour Party had, by January 1939 coordinated their activities in a campaign against the

Party, was a popular frontist; and it was he who scripted and directed the film.

63. See, H. Dalton, The Fateful Years: Memoirs 1931 - 1945 (London, 1957), pp.200, 207; B.Pimlott, op.cit., pp.162 ff.

National Government, in which local cooperative political and educational groups and divisional Labour Parties were fully involved. It would seem therefore that, within two months of its release Advance Democracy was made partially redundant, its target audience firmly committed to a line to which the film was opposed. Yet the film flourished, being in 'constant circulation', shown by Labour Parties, cooperative groups and trade union branches. The film was even used in this joint pre-election campaign. Campaign organisers had urged the use of film propaganda in a bid to mobilise all possible resources against the Government; and there are reports suggesting that this was carried out: in the Tamworth and Brighton areas for example, cooperative political organisations supplemented their usual propaganda repertoire with showings of Advance Democracy and other films at political meetings. (64) There is no clear indication whether the attraction of this film resided less in the film itself and more in the use, indiscriminately, of 'Labour' films per se, or, and this is less likely, in the existence of a subdued body of 'popular front' support within the ranks of the cooperative movement and the Labour Party. Whatever the case may be the film was given enthusiastic support.

2. The Cooperative Union and the Cooperative Wholesale Society

While other sections of the cooperative movement also used film, and quite extensively, none did so for specifically political purposes, although attempts were made in this direction. The Cooperative Wholesale Society, as a national organisation, had been using films for trade publicity since 1898. In 1928 it began exhibiting film in 'public', the first film being The Magic Basket, which was scheduled for showing in 1000 cinemas that year. By the end of 1930 six CWS films advertising the production activities of the organisation were being shown in this way, including two 'talkies'; and twelve silent films illustrating manufacturing and trading activities were, from 1929, routinely shown by the CWS Publicity Department, which organised 'Film Entertainment Nights'

64. Cooperative News, 21 January 1939, p.1; 18 February 1939, p.5; Labour, February 1939, p.8.

for cooperators in cooperative halls.(65) This publicity material was the principal film output of the CWS in the 1930's, a regular programme of production being maintained with, for instance, four films being produced in 1936, including ones with such titles as Biscuit Time and Merry Mondays. Exhibition was quite extensive. For example, during the winter of 1937-8 1206 shows were arranged, to an estimated total audience of 323,000. Typical of programmes for these meetings was one given in Middlesborough in December 1937 to 250 people: Clothes Make the Man, Let's Dress the Ladies, Kitchen Capers and The Sweets of Victory, all of which were publicity or advertising films. These shows were very popular, becoming an integral part of local cooperative social and community gatherings; and in the winter of 1938-9 films were hired from the CWS film service on no less than 1620 occasions for shows of this kind.(66) The majority of exhibitions were given non-theatrically, either using outdoor film vans which employed a system of back-projection, or in halls and cooperative rooms. Advertising in cinemas appears to have been too expensive to maintain, and the CWS confined such publicity to the screening of slides. Where, however, cooperative societies owned cinemas full advantage was taken to show material to the exclusion of the publicity of rival traders. By 1936 there were

probably twelve societies in the country which have successfully entered the entertainment industry, and own cinemas for the benefit of their members and the general public..... (67)

Barnsley CS, for example, was giving free sound film shows, none of a propaganda or publicity nature, as early as October 1935. Audiences were invited to contribute to a collection in aid of a local charity.(68)

65. Labour Magazine, January 1928, p.430; October 1929, p.286; April 1930, p.575; December 1930, p.383; P.Redfearn, The New History of the CWS (London, 1938), pp.429-30.
66. Cooperative Union Congress, 1936, p.332; 1939, p.80; Cooperative News, 1 January 1938, p.7; 23 April, p.9. This figure does not include over 300 educational and entertainment films hired over the same period. A fascinating collection of CWS publicity films is available for study at the North West Film Archive, Manchester Polytechnic.
67. The Cooperative Educator, April 1936, p.35. The move by the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association in 1934 calling on the Home Office to introduce provisions whereby the 1909 Cinematograph Act would be applicable to 16mm exhibition was strongly rejected by the CWS on the grounds that it would effectively end its film publicity work, as displays in cinemas 'cannot always be made'. Cooperative Union Library, Cooperative Union: Minutes of the Central Executive, Executive Committee Minutes, 20 October 1934. (Hereafter, 'CUMCE'.)
68. Kinematograph Weekly, 17 October 1935, p.13.

By 1939 there appears to have been a decline in ownership of cinemas, and there were only between five and eight cooperative societies which did so. Of these, all but one appear to have given exhibitions in a commercial format. The exception, Derby CS Education Committee, interspersed regular commercial programmes with lectures, educational exhibitions and even concerts.(69)

The Cooperative Union, in accordance with its coordinating and advisory roles, was more disposed to use films for political-educational purposes. Moves to use film to advertise cooperative principles were first made at the Congress of the International Cooperative Alliance in August 1927; and attempts were made subsequently to organise an international distribution network for the supply of such films. By 1930 the Cooperative Union had implemented a scheme of educational film displays, including the use of two mobile vans touring the country. Shows combined educational with entertainment and publicity material 'calculated to attract and hold the interest of audiences'.(70) In 1933 the Educational Executive of the Cooperative Union arranged, in conjunction with the neo-marxist (and influential) National Council of Labour Colleges (NCLC), a series of film exhibitions as part of a joint 'educational programme'. J.P.M. Millar of the NCLC had already arranged for the supply of Soviet Russia: Past and Present, and two films produced by the Socialist Film Council, Road to Hell and What the Newsreel Does Not Show, to NCLC groups, and presumably the joint scheme with the Cooperative Union involved the showing of these and cooperative films.(71) The value of this educational work was becoming increasingly apparent, and by the mid-1930's there were calls from a number of cooperative bodies, including Scottish cooperators, for

the preparation of educational and propaganda films, distinct from the Trade publicity films now in use by the CWS and the Scottish CWS. (72)

69. Kinematograph Year Book, 1940.
70. Cooperative Union Library, CUMCE, Central Education Committee Minutes, 18 January 1930, 17 May 1930; The Cooperative Educator, January 1930, p.17.
71. Cooperative Union Library, CUMCE, Educational Executive Committee Minutes, 16 September 1933; Plebs, September 1933, pp.209-10; June 1934, p.142.
72. Cooperative Union Library, CUMCE, Joint Propaganda and Trade Committee Minutes, 19 November 1934.

The Government's attitude to the cooperative movement, the hostile press campaigns of the Daily Express and the Daily Mail, and the result of the 1935 General Election gave further impetus to these demands. The National Cooperative Authority, reviewing the situation in December that year, concluded that as the influence of the movement had been insufficient to change the character of the Government it was imperative that the movement adopted a political stand and used its power to defend itself and regain some of the lost ground of recent years. In particular, the repeal of the additional tax liabilities imposed on cooperative trade which had, by benefiting ordinary commerce, been a source of much bitterness throughout the movement. (73)

This political shift had an impact on the use of film by the movement. In response to the political attacks on cooperation a 'Ten Year Plan for Education' was drawn up in 1936 to extend the junior and adult education classes within the movement. The emphasis was to be on instruction in cooperative principles in a remarkably ambitious attempt to lay the foundations of a more 'cooperative' society. (74) The development of a film service was included in this Plan, not simply to augment existing teaching methods in relation to the standard range of class subjects, but because, as one member of the committee which drew up the Plan explained, 'films can be most effective means of cooperative education and propaganda that is possible', and there was a need for 'education films dealing with the Cooperative Movement and Cooperative ideals'. (75) However the Cooperative Union quickly discovered that the provision of such a film service required financial resources far beyond its reach, and approached the CWS in the autumn of 1936 with a view to developing a joint operation.

It was at this point that the National Association of Cooperative Education Committees canvassed the movement for support for a film service under its own auspices. There followed a bitter and prolonged wrangle (which was never resolved) as to which organisation was in the more favourable position to provide the service. The NACEC maintained

73. Cooperative Union Library, CUMCE, National Cooperative Authority Minutes, 5 December 1935.

74. See the Cooperative Union's pamphlet, Education for Social Change op.cit., written by Reeves.

75. J.H.Poyser, 'Cinema Films', The Cooperative Educator, April 1936, p.39; Cooperative Union Congress, 1937, pp.460-1.

that it had been pressing for such a scheme since 1932, and that as the Cooperative Union had been unwilling or unable to do anything in this direction, it had assumed responsibility for the project. The CU and the CWS objected that as firstly, one film organisation had already built up within the movement a body of experience and a network of contacts, another was unnecessary and wasteful; and that any new service should be built around this existing department. Secondly, that whereas the NACEC operated on a very tight budget and would be unable to fund film production, the combined resources of their organisations would be adequate for the task. In reply the NACEC maintained that the CWS had not produced a single 'social' film, being pre-occupied with film-advertising material, and was not concerned with the more politically oriented films which the NACEC wished to show. Despite several attempts by the NACEC to negotiate a compromise solution, the acrimony generated by the issue soured relationships badly, and neither the Cooperative Union nor the CWS were willing to even consider forming a tri-partite service.

The history of the wrangle extends into the war years, and the details are of little relevance to the main course of events under scrutiny here.⁽⁷⁶⁾ The three main points in the whole affair which merit consideration are, firstly, that it would appear that the CWS Film Department was distinctly piqued by the NACEC initiative, and persuaded the CU that its film interests would be better served in collaboration with the Department. Secondly, that the CU took a political decision not to subscribe to the NACEC scheme, considering that the perspectives of that body were not readily compatible with its own. Thirdly, that before the Labour Party and the TUC had finally agreed on funding a Labour film service, the cooperative movement was prepared to run two such schemes, both informed by political motives, and one, that of the CU/CWS, unwilling to 'cooperate' with the other.

The formation of the CU/CWS film service was announced in October 1937. Realising that due to competition from the commercial cinemas the 'old-fashioned-type of propaganda meeting is losing its appeal', it was intended to combine 'entertainment, education and

76. For details of the dispute, see, Cooperative Union Congress, 1938, pp.533, 538-40; The Cooperators' Year Book, 1938, pp.67-9; The Cooperative Educator, January 1938, p.10; Cooperative News, 23 April 1938, p.9; 7 May 1938, p.12; 14 May 1938, p.2; 21 May 1938, p.3.

propaganda' films as a 'valuable alternative' basis for attracting audiences to meetings and classes.(77) The impulse behind the scheme had been political as well as educational; and the service was anticipated with much enthusiasm by cooperative education committees anxious 'to show the public not only how cooperative goods are made, but why they are made'. There was, as is revealed in this statement, a recognition of the need to reach the public - that is, non-cooperators; and the same advocate went on to explain

propaganda films should be exhibited to the general public.... while instructive picturescould be shown to cooperative guilds and classes..... because if we are to have talking pictures for propaganda and education, let us be quite sure in advance of what we want. Propaganda and education are not synonymous. We need two kinds of instructive pictures, propaganda films to sow the seed, and educational films to nurture the young plants which have sprung up from the seed. (78)

Anticipated as taking 'a foremost place in the Ten Year Plan objective of popularising the cooperative idea and ideals', the CWS National Film Service (as the CU/CWS scheme came to be known) was inaugurated in April 1938, offering a full range of documentary, publicity, travel and entertainment films, equipment and advice, and special services such as roadshows. The Service was to be supervised by a joint CU/CWS committee, with the former assuming responsibility for all educational film work.(79)

Unfortunately, the records of the CWS National Film Service are not available, and there is nothing in Cooperative Union records which provides information on the scope of the Service. From what few references there are in sources such as the Cooperative News, it would seem that it confined its activities largely to the provision of publicity material and entertainment films: the intention being to attract people to meetings. A few films survive from this period and they either advertise CWS goods or publicise the work of various cooperative organisations. An exception is Women's Cooperative Guild Congress, Hull 1939, a 16mm silent film lasting 10 minutes. The film examines how business is conducted at such a conference, described in the introductory title sequence as 'The Mothers' Parliament of Britain'. The surviving copy is incomplete, but from the internal evidence of the

77. Cooperative News, 30 October 1937, p.8.

78. Anon., 'Films sell our goods: Why not employ them to "sell" our principles?', ibid., 9 April 1938, Supplement. Emphasis in original.

79. Ibid., 23 April 1938, p.9; 30 April 1938, p.4.

film it is unlikely that the few minutes of film which no longer survive were concerned with cooperative ideals beyond the general statements of cooperative philosophy given in the speeches of the Mayor of Hull and the President of the Congress - and with silent film nothing ambitious could be achieved anyway in the manner of a persuasive disquisition on cooperation. Despite the pressures which prompted a more politically motivated use of film, there is nothing overtly political in these surviving films. They conform more accurately to the educational ambitions of the Ten Year Plan, explaining and promoting cooperation in a manner very similar to the more usual CWS publicity films of the pre-1938 period. The National Film Service, judging by such films, was a cadre organisation in classic style, showing propaganda to promote the movement at specially convened meetings before audiences largely composed of cooperators and those sympathetic to the ideals of the movement. In the absence of more detailed information, and more CU/CWS films to study, no firm conclusions can be drawn. But it would seem that the Service did not try to produce specific propaganda films to engage in some of the political issues which affected the movement. Plans were drawn up along the lines recommended by the anonymous writer quoted above (p.378). The Educational Executive of the Cooperative Union resolved to allocate £35,000 for the production of two films, one a documentary on the history and achievements of the movement; and the other, a feature on the Rochdale Pioneers intended for exhibition in cinemas. Neither was produced before war broke out. Similarly, a more political intention may be inferred from the decision to approve in principle the proposals made by the National Joint Film Committee of the Labour Party and the TUC for the formation of a unified Labour Film Service. But again, nothing was achieved as far as merging the CWS National Film Service and the Workers' Film Association was concerned before September 1939. (80)

80. Cooperative News, 15 April 1939; Cooperative Union Library, CUMCE, Education Executive Committee Minutes, 18 March 1939; 15 September 1939. Two films were produced by the Cooperative Union: one a silent record of the proceedings of the CU's Congress at Scarborough in 1938; the other a five minute sound film of a junior educational class organised by the CU, also in 1938.

The CWS made far greater use of film than any other section of the Labour movement. But this usage, although of the cadre type, was essentially of a commercial and educational character rather than a political one. Education was of course central to the political strategy of the cooperative movement as a whole; but it was left largely to the small but influential RACS and the London Cooperative Society to give to such educational work a distinct political purpose. But even though the National Association of Cooperative Education Committees provided this work with a national scope, such a project was necessarily limited since few cooperative societies had the means of projection on a regular basis, and few films relating specifically to cooperation were available for use in such a context. The large capital investment needed for a serious attempt to use film for overt political purposes was eventually made, but came rather late in the day for the original purpose of the scheme, as war intervened. It is difficult to quantify the full scope of cooperative film work. The CWS appears to have used films extensively in its work. NACEC film work was sizeable in the context in which it was operating, but in comparison with that of the CWS was probably quite limited, reaching only a small proportion of cooperators, trade unionists and members of the Labour Party.

The history of these developments is one of curious ironies. The cooperative movement, the least politically dynamic section of the Labour movement, produced the most sophisticated and attractive political propaganda films for the social democratic organisations of that movement. Perhaps more poignantly, internal squabbles prevented different bodies within the cooperative movement from 'cooperating' to maximise the effectiveness of film work. The film work of the CWS was one point of departure for those within the Labour Party and the TUC who considered that the medium could be used for political purposes, since it was clear that good films could be made which had style, professionalism, conviction and made an impact. But it was the energy and enthusiasm of Joseph Reeves, and the obvious success of the NACEC Film Department, which prompted Labour Party and TUC leaders to initiate their own agency for film publicity and propaganda, the Workers' Film Association.

Chapter Nine: Film and Social Democratic Organisations;
The Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress

1.

During those years, 1918 - 1930, when the two principal organisations of the Labour movement, the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, rose to national prominence, new mass media, radio and film, emerged as sources for mass political communication. These developments coincided with extensions of the franchise which increased the voting population by approximately twenty million people - almost half the total population. The partial assimilation of the Labour Party leadership to the political elite of the country was fiercely contested by the Conservative and Liberal Parties. The 1920's were subsequently characterised by intense competition for political dominance within the expanding and uncertain territory of the newly enfranchised. The new media, in providing access to means of political communication, contributed to this competition, thereby consolidating their own political importance and contributing to the democratisation of the British political culture.

The cinema, though its political utility did not become fully apparent until the arrival of synchronised sound, was attractive for sociological and psychological reasons. It was not merely a major form of entertainment but a central aspect of working class culture, with weekly attendances reaching 18.5 million by 1934, the overwhelming majority of these people being working class. Commentators within the Labour movement were convinced of the residual power of film to influence the minds of people almost against their will, and perceived in the cinema trade's use of the medium a disturbing political-psychological danger: the mass of people were slowly being 'drugged' into a passivity ideal for authoritarian government or even dictatorship.

Highly critical and suspicious though they may have been, Labour leaders were compelled to reconsider their dismissive attitude towards the medium as new possibilities for visual education, publicity and persuasion were developed. Both major political parties responded in a

similar manner to the prospect of using film for direct political communication, in so far as the Conservative and Labour Parties shared the view that the medium was potentially influential because of its facility for manipulating emotional responses. They also believed that as the electorate was sufficiently vulnerable to the propaganda of their opponents, it was no longer possible, with the expansion of the voting population, to reliably assess the probable political preferences of a considerable number of constituencies. Each Party therefore considered that it could not afford to ignore the use of the film medium as a channel for publicity and as an electoral weapon.

However, first considering the use of film in 1918, the Labour Party did not establish a film service for itself and the Labour movement until 1938; whereas the Conservative Party quickly developed a film propaganda technique in 1925.⁽¹⁾ Developed essentially as an extension of existing publicity services, film propaganda was given considerable status by members of the Conservative Party Leadership. Daylight cinema vans were used showing specially produced films (using a system of back-projection), and Party units toured the country giving free shows on street corners, using the films both to convey a message and attract an audience for the accompanying speakers. By 1930 the Party had built up a fleet of twelve daylight vans and twelve vans carrying portable equipment for indoor use. The same year the service was placed on a professional footing, under the auspices of a Party-financed Conservative and Unionist Films Association, and a film company was launched to run the vans and produce films for the Party. With considerable assistance from leading personalities in the film trade, notably Sir Albert Clavering, the Conservative Party's film propaganda organisation made a substantial contribution to the electoral publicity of the National Government in 1931, 1935 and 1939. The films shown by the CFA, mainly 10 - 15 minute shorts, ranged from cartoons and acted dialogues to compilation material and direct speeches by Party leaders. It would appear that the cinema van system was considered to be successful by Party publicists, and Conservative Central Office attached increasing importance to this method of publicity with each passing year, its appeal residing not merely in assumptions about the persuasive qualities of film or

1. The Times, 8 April 1926, p.9; 13 April 1926, p.12.

its ability to attract audiences, but to its uniqueness: no other party used such a system during the inter-war period.(2)

The consistent use of cinema vans by the Conservative Party, and by the National Government's National Publicity Bureau,(3) was a measure of Conservatives' belief in the political utility of film. The Labour Party, as a national organisation, attached similar importance to the medium, yet did not begin to utilise the medium in an organised fashion until 1938.

The publicity of the Labour Party was closely coordinated with that of the Trades Union Congress from 1921 under the auspices of the National Joint Council of the two organisations; and, after 1931, much of the Party's campaign work was integrated with that of the TUC. It is from within this established practice of joint publicity activities that plans to introduce a film service for the Labour movement were made. The following discussion will consequently consider these two organisations largely concurrently. Moreover, the chapter will concentrate almost entirely on these two national bodies. The Scottish TUC displayed no recorded interest in the medium. Cinema trade unions apart (the Association of Cinematograph Technicians and the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees) only one trade union, the Transport and General Workers' Union, was 'represented' on the various committees of the TUC and the Labour Party set up to devise a film service; and its 'representative' was present in a personal capacity. Only three trade unions at national level were willing to sponsor film production during the 1930's, and of the resulting films, only one was available for exhibition before 1940: Britain Expects, produced by the Progressive Film Institute in 1938 and sponsored by the National Union of Seamen.

Lack of achievement does not necessarily signify lack of attempt or insufficient interest. There were throughout the 1930's over a thousand

2. T.J.Hollins, 'The Conservative Party and Film Propaganda Between the Wars', English Historical Review, vol.96, April 1981, pp.359-69.
3. The Bureau was established in 1935 by the Government to publicise its achievements and generally prepare the ground for the General Election. For a contemporary view of its activities, see R.D.Casey, 'The National Publicity Bureau and British Party Propaganda', Public Opinion Quarterly, October 1939, pp.632-34.

individual trade unions, 208 of which were affiliated to the TUC.(4) The executive records of some of these unions no longer exist, such as those of the National Union of Seamen. Some are not open to researchers, such as those of the Amalgamated Engineering Union; some are located around the country and it has not been possible to consult them; others record very little information, such as those of the Electrical Trades Union; and some provide a wealth of information, such as those of the Transport and General Workers' Union. A sample of large, medium and small unions was selected, and the executive records of the following unions were consulted: the Transport and General Workers' Union, the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, the National Union of Railwaymen, the Electrical Trades Union and the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions. The Annual Reports and Reports of Proceedings of the Annual General Meetings of the following were also consulted: the National Union of Seamen, the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, the Union of Post Office Workers, the National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants, the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, the United Society of Boilermakers and Iron and Steel Shipbuilders, the National Federation of Building Trades Operatives, the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, the United Patternmakers Association, the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain and the Transport and General Workers' Union. There is no indication in any of these records that the question of film as a medium of publicity for the movement was seriously considered. Journals such as the AEU Monthly, the TGWU's The Record, and NATSOPA Journal proved similarly unrevealing.

Because no comprehensive survey of trade union records has been undertaken some caution is necessary in drawing conclusions, and further research is needed for a complete survey of such records to establish which, if any, unions showed an interest in using film. Caution is also required regarding those records consulted: lack of evidence does not establish that conversations did not take place. However, from the records

4. H.Pelling, A History of British Trade Unionism (Harmondsworth, 1965), pp.262-3. At its lowest point, in 1934, TUC affiliated membership accounted for 73% of total union membership. Union membership affiliated to the Labour Party varied between 35% and 45% of total union membership during the decade. A.H.Halsey (ed.), Trends in British Society Since 1900 (London, 1972), Table 4.13, p.125.

of the Labour Party and the TUC, which tried to establish a film service for the whole of the Labour movement, and which attempted to draw in individual unions during the planning of the service, it is clear that no formal interest was shown by any union, apart from the ACT, in establishing such a film service; and it is doubtful that more extensive research in trade union records would reveal more than statements showing that, in principle, such a film service was desirable. A general conclusion therefore that individual trade unions at the national level displayed little or no interest in the formation of a film service for the Labour movement, holds good, regardless of the limited sample of trade union records consulted. The perspective of trade union leaders was neatly formulated by the Special Executive Committee of the National Union of Railwaymen which, in response to suggestions by the Workers' Film Association that the Union might participate in 'a film depicting the life of the railway worker', recorded that

such a film would not advance the interests of the workers from either a trade union or an economic standpoint. (5)

and decided to take no action. Other unions approached by the WFA did not even formally consider the question. It would appear that in general they believed that the development of a Labour film service, and the production of Labour film propaganda, was the responsibility of the TUC, or even of the Labour Party (to whose political funds they contributed considerably); and that just as it was the responsibility of individual branches or area organisations to arrange routine political, trade union or cultural/social meetings, so it was their responsibility for arranging film exhibition at such meetings.

The records of the following constituency Parties and Trades Councils, largely minute books and annual reports, have been consulted: Huddersfield LP, Greenwich LP, Sheffield City LP, York City LP, Leeds City LP, Clapham LP, South Hammersmith LP, Bradford Trades Council, Leeds TC, Brighouse TC, Keighley TC, Wakefield TC, York and District TC, Manchester and Salford TC, Glasgow TC, Hull TC, Halifax Trades and Labour Council, and London Trades Council. No systematic examination of constituency party records has been undertaken, due partly to the practical difficulties involved in seeing them; and many records for the 1930's have not survived, for instance, those of the Bradford Labour Party. Those

5. TUC Library, National Union of Railwaymen, Proceedings and Reports, Special Executive Committee Minutes, 2 March 1939.

which have been consulted can not be regarded as a representative sample, as the sample is too small. They only rarely contain items of information relating to film exhibitions, etc., and what there is is in the briefest detail. Little of value to this study has emerged therefore from what was a very time-consuming exercise. Additional information has been gleaned from the correspondence files of the records of the National Council for Civil Liberties. But again it sheds little light on local activities. The Cashbook and Ledger of the Workers' Film Association provide the clearest indication of which Labour Parties and Trades Councils used film as part of their activities. But only occasionally did a local branch or Party show films on more than two or three occasions; and these sources are limited since they only indicate which local bodies used films from the WFA library. The Labour Party was not a fully integrated political party, and many constituency parties pursued a line in some measure independent of the National Executive Committee. Further research therefore is needed to systematically examine Labour Party records across the country, to provide an accurate picture of the extent to which such activity varied from one area to another, and of the extent to which local activity followed or was in advance of the initiatives of the national leadership. This chapter is therefore a study of the Trades Union Congress and the Labour Party National Executive Committee. Their administrative records are complete, and the Minutes of the National Joint Film Committee provide a detailed source of information. This has been supplemented by interviews and correspondence with members of that Committee, including J.J. Taylor, Lord Citrine, Sir Vincent Tawson, George Elvin, Lord Calder, and Paul Rotha.

2.

Throughout the inter-war period the Labour Party and the TUC attached great emphasis to publicity work. There were many reasons for this. Both organisations needed to increase their membership; the former to improve the strength of its electoral organisation, the latter to end the dramatic decline in trade union membership, which had continued to fall relentlessly since 1920, to strengthen its ailing finances, and establish greater control over the trade union movement as a whole. Of equally fundamental importance was an equation of the political progress of the Labour Party with democratic advance. This view conferred upon the state of public opinion a considerable importance. In the context of

a struggle to establish credibility and support for a political organisation of the working class, publicity or propaganda (used synonymously in this period) was conceived as the principal method of acquiring not simply greater parliamentary representation but State power. Labour's response to the post-war situation, Bernard Barker has noted, was

a vigorous emphasis on "education"; an outpouring of leaflets, classes, special efforts and, above all else, newspapers. (6)

The leaders of the Labour Party in particular attached immense significance to the need both to inform people as to the views and policies of the Party, and to educate public opinion as to its ideals and purposes. Philip Snowden, for example, maintained that both the Party rank and file and public opinion generally had to be educated before they could be expected to act politically in a responsible and constructive manner. According to him Labour's policies and propaganda were to be part of a

better and truer education, an education which will teach the citizens to use their power wisely and well. (7)

Ramsay MacDonald concurred in this view. Believing that it would be unwise for the Party to go beyond the levels of political understanding so far achieved by the bulk of the electorate he asserted in 1919 that 'the only action which is possible at the moment is that of changing opinion and awakening intelligence'. 'The sole way leading to Socialism', he argued later, 'is the way of education.' (8)

The Party's political progress was conceived as contingent upon the level of understanding of the voting population. Mass public opinion was conceptualised as a major site of political struggle and the basis for future advance. In the evolution of a national Labour Party after 1918 considerable resources and status were given to research and publicity in recognition of the need to contest the Party's opponents on all issues which affected working people, and to do so with reliable and convincing information and policy statements. It was with such considerations in

6. B. Barker, The Politics of Propaganda (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of York, 1972), p. xiii.
7. P. Snowden, Labour and the New World (London, 1921), p. 224.
8. J. R. MacDonald, Parliament and Revolution (Manchester, 1919), p. 89; Socialism: Critical and Constructive 2nd. ed., (London, 1924), p. 229.

mind that, for example, the Party and the TUC coordinated their publicity work in 1921 through the National Joint Council, and a number of specialist research and advisory committees were set up. (9)

Equally compelling in this view of public opinion was a need to combat what was considered the often distorted and hostile presentation of Labour and its national organisations by the press and, increasingly, by other media. While believing that the individual was ultimately a rational being, Labour leaders assumed that the bulk of the population was so ill-informed as to be incapable of making rational political choices. This situation, it was assumed, was due in part to the gullibility, the suggestibility of the masses; and this opinion was reinforced by widely held views as to the nature of the crowd mentality, and the potential for emotional hysteria.

Public opinion was considered to be heavily determined by the press, and, reeling from the assaults on Labour in 1924 and 1931, Labour leaders were convinced that not only were they victims of deception and trickery, but would continue to be so until Labour could explain its case to the people. Profound distrust of the press was therefore matched by a political determination shared by both the Party and the TUC to inform and educate people, both with regard to the movement and the issues central to its development, and broader political and social issues.

Such considerations were informed by a broader realisation that the bulk of the working class was either politically indifferent to, ignorant of, or opposed to social democratic ideas. At one level the Party and the TUC responded to this by advocating changes in the formal educational system to allow greater access for working class children. (10) At the level of immediate practical politics emphasis was given to the conduct of campaigns, publicity exercises and the organisation of a regular supply of information on key issues, explaining 'the facts of the case' and the Party's or the TUC's views on them. An example of this educational campaign work is the concentration, in the 1924-29 period, as M.A. Hamilton observed, on

9. See R. Barker, The Politics of Propaganda *op.cit.*, pp.189-208.

10. See R. Barker, Education and Politics 1900 - 1951: A Study of the Labour Party (Oxford, 1972).

the great issues of international policy. Peace, disarmament, the League of Nations - these were the major themes at Labour meetings. A great educational campaign was patiently carried on. (11)

There was therefore a considerable emphasis within the Labour leaderships before 1929 on the importance of publicity and campaign work as a major area of activity. With successive election defeats and the continuing prospect of parliamentary paralysis, the Labour Party was confronted with the related tasks of restoring its image and re-establishing its credibility as the alternative party of Government. These tasks were set in relief by the prospect, after 1935, of possibly losing a third consecutive election. Unable to make any substantial parliamentary impact on the course of events. (having, in 1931 less than one tenth of the number of seats of the National Government, and in 1935 only a third), convinced that the Government's foreign policies were leading the country to disaster, and facing the prospect after 1935 of serious political decline, the Labour Party was in a difficult position, made more uncertain by internal divisions which threatened to repeat an earlier split with equally ruinous consequences. Ben Pimlott has observed that

Labour might have exercised a major influence in the 1930's but the mass movement did not provide the means for it to do so. (12)

This view overlooks however one of the outstanding characteristics of the Labour Party leadership of those years: there was neither the political will nor the combative instinct for assertive action outside parliament designed to seriously challenge the Government. Essentially an electoral organisation, the Party 'quite deliberately narrowed its field of action', content to wait for the election of 1939/40. (13) Nor was the Party alone in this approach. Under the leadership of Sir Walter Citrine and the TUC General Council, the trade union movement was politically supine, demoralised by the defeats of 1926 and 1927 and the industrial decline which set in after 1929. The TUC was particularly

11. M.A. Hamilton, Arthur Henderson (London, 1938), p.279.
12. B.Pimlott, Labour and the Left in the 1930's *op.cit.*, p.2.
13. R.Miliband, Parliamentary Socialism *op.cit.*, pp.233-5.

concerned to establish for itself a role in the routine consultation, policy-formulation and decision-making processes of State and industry. Such a role required the transformation of the TUC's public image and, as with Party leaders, members of the General Council were unwilling to embark on a policy of confrontation with the National Government. They too were essentially constitutional in outlook, and were disposed to await the general election of 1939/40. (14)

Under such circumstances, traditional emphasis on general publicity and political education provided the foundation for much of the Party's activities. Performing a diminutive and largely ineffectual parliamentary role the Party concentrated on the immediate task of maintaining its political presence and the longer-term task of improving its public image, hoping to restore its political stature sufficiently to ensure the return of a majority Labour Government by the end of the decade. Heavy investment in the hopes of success in that election, and fear of the appalling consequences of further electoral failure, generated considerable reliance on educational, campaign and publicity work, to build up electoral support. Thus after the debacle of 1931, one of the most conspicuous aspects of Party work was the 'Victory for Socialism' campaign. Intended to educate millions in social democratic ideas and thereby pave the way for electoral triumph, the campaign was a massive propaganda operation, which demanded such a large proportion of Party and trade union resources that its continuation over eighteen months seriously hampered the routine propaganda work of the Party. Again, after the 1935 defeat two massive campaigns were launched specifically geared to electoral purposes; one in early 1936, and the other, the 'National Campaign' to publicise Labour's Immediate Programme (the Party's manifesto). It also was such a drain on resources that in early 1939, two years after its inauguration, the Party was in serious financial difficulty.

The reasons for the emphasis on education and publicity work were the reasons which led the Labour Party to consider using film. As early as April 1918 the Party considered using film for propaganda purposes, and suggestions were drawn up for using daylight cinema vans.

14. R. Miliband, op.cit., p.236. See also, H.A. Clegg, The System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain (Oxford, 1970), pp.338, 398-9; E. Wigham, Strikes and the Government (London, 1976), p.74.

Eventually proposals were put forward, in November the following year, for the formation of a company to produce films for exhibition by divisional Labour Parties in local halls, and films suitable for exhibition in cinemas. (15) Discovering that

the manufacturers of films have not made any films presenting directly or indirectly the Labour point of view (16)

a Film Committee was set up to establish a syndicate to produce scenarios for film production and organise the provision of equipment, films and advice to the Party's constituency candidates, on a profit-sharing basis. (17) The scheme was publicised in a circular to Trades Councils in March 1920. Film, it claimed, had been used with great success by the Government during the war. The experiences gained in this method of publicity

is now being used by capitalist interests in various ways to undermine and check the progress of Labour throughout the country, and there is little doubt that unless effective measures are taken to counteract this new form of political warfare it may have serious consequences at election time. (18)

Portable projectors and three types of film were to be provided by the Committee: 'films of a purely propaganda nature', 'films not purely propaganda but capable of being used to point a moral' and 'films of ordinary and topical interest'. The first category would have to be specially produced, and arrangements were being made with the cinema trade for the supply of the other types. The circular concluded that the potential importance of the scheme 'can scarcely be exaggerated', and appealed to all Labour organisations to participate in it as 'no time should be lost in utilising such a powerful weapon in the cause of Labour'. (19)

Nothing materialised, and the records of the Party give no indication as to why - probably the project was abandoned due to lack of support from constituency organisations. Even so, the episode reveals

15. LPNEC, Literature and Publicity Committee, 11 November 1919; Labour Party Press and Publicity Department, 'Film Propaganda', 18 December 1919.
16. Ibid., Labour Party Press and Publicity Department, 'Film Propaganda', 18 December 1919.
17. Ibid.; Labour Party Press and Publicity Department, Reports on 'Labour Propaganda Films' and 'Capital of Proposed Syndicate', n.d.,

the Labour leaders (including Sidney Webb, Arthur Henderson and William Brace) and prominent Fabians (notably George Bernard Shaw) responded quickly to the new possibilities for publicity developed during the war, and considered the medium highly appropriate for electoral purposes.

Eight years passed before the use of film was reconsidered by the Party's NEC. Determined to utilise all possible channels to boost the Party's standing in readiness for the approaching General Election, publicists at Head Office sought new and novel ways to publicise the organisation and its leaders. Seeking fresh ideas, W.W.Henderson, Head of the Publicity Department, requested advice from the German Social Democratic Party, which obliged by sending samples of 'election soap' with verses on them, inscribed balloons, and gramophone records of Labour songs and speeches by Labour leaders. It also recommended the use of electric election signs, the aerial distribution of leaflets, and film exhibitions both in halls and by daylight cinema vans.(20) During the following six months the Party's Research and Publicity Committee considered many of these suggestions, including daylight and nightlight electric signs urging 'vote Labour', film slides, gramophone records, and mobile loud-speaker apparatus. Inquiries were also made into 'mobile cinema propaganda', the production of a 'propaganda newsfilm' and the production of 'a good Labour film'.(21) Although costs submitted for the newsfilm were considered prohibitive, a sum of £200 for a thirty minute silent film appears to have been accepted in principle. Moreover, perhaps impressed by the success of the two sound pictures of MacDonald and J.H.Thomas made that year,(22) approaches were made to British Talking Pictures to produce a sound film for the Party. The approach was rejected, and, with constituency parties displaying little interest in the idea, the project, already in jeopardy due to the Party's financial difficulties, was abandoned.(23)

18. LPNEC, Labour Party Circular, 'Labour Cinema Propaganda', March 1920.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., Research and Publicity Committee Minutes, 25 June 1928, K.Ludwig (German Social Democratic Party) to the Labour Party, 13 June 1928. The SDP even sent a copy of one of its election films to Transport House.
21. Ibid., 'General Election Campaign Propaganda', 25 September 1928.
22. These were purely experimental films arranged by British Talking Pictures, British Acoustic Films and Gaumont. For details, see PRO, Ramsay MacDonald Papers, 30/69/6/31, and 30/69/6/32, correspondence with British Acoustic Films and The Bioscope.

On taking office in June 1929 Labour Ministers willingly took advantage of the numerous opportunities which arose to make newsreel appearances. (24) Considerable value was attached to such appearances; and influential Party members were apparently keen to use the medium because, as William Mellor advised MacDonald, it could be used as a 'counteractive' to other sound films being exhibited by Labour's political opponents. (25) Other considerations also suggest an interest in utilising newsreel opportunities, whenever they arose. The National Agent, G.R. Shepherd, reported in 1930 that

Spiritually, the rank and file of the Party were not connected up with the National Movement. There is no closeness of touch, or personal contact, between the leadership and responsible people, in the Provinces. (26)

There was evidently some recognition of the need for Labour leaders to establish their presence in the public eye. Newsreels offered one possibility for reaching large audiences simultaneously - and with little cost to the Party or the Government. An interest in newsreel publicity also arose in connection with the conduct of international relations. The 1928 Party Programme, Labour and the Nation, in repudiating the principles of traditional diplomacy, constructed Labour's foreign policy around collective security. The programme discussed 'six pillars of peace': the renunciation of war, disarmament, arbitration, economic cooperation, publicity and political cooperation.

The Fifth Pillar of Peace is Publicity - the fullest publicity, both in Parliament and in the Council, Assembly, and other organs of the League, with regard to all dealings with foreign Governments. The Labour Government would submit all international agreements to the House of Commons for its consent, and would see that the public was kept fully informed of the handling of foreign affairs. (27)

Here was a categorical commitment to fully publicise a future Labour Government's conduct of foreign affairs. The news values of the newsreels were determined more by entertainment criteria than principles of political journalism. Producing material for international consumption,

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23. LPNEC, Research and Publicity Committee, 17 December 1928. For the financial problems of the Party see, Finance and General Purposes Committee, 30 September 1927; NEC Memorandum, 'The Financial Position' 6 November 1929.
24. See above Chapter Three, pp.48, 78-80.
25. PRO, Ramsay MacDonald Papers, 30/69/6/31, Mellor to MacDonald, 2 February 1928.

Editors quickly discovered that the coverage of foreign affairs provided a more attractive combination of topical interest, exoticism, entertainment and political news than coverage of domestic events (unless, of course, such events were very 'dramatic'). Newsreel coverage was consequently drawn towards political events of a more international character - no doubt encouraged by a profusion of such events. While Arthur Greenwood could be seen announcing a new housing scheme, MacDonald and Henderson were seen more frequently at the London Naval Conference, in Geneva, in Berlin, or speaking on the Hoover Moratorium. Between June 1929 and the resignation of the Cabinet in August 1931 British Movietone News gave political coverage to Labour Ministers on average once a month; and of these 26 items, at least ten were concerned with the Government's conduct of foreign affairs. British Paramount News, commencing in March 1931, covered Labour Ministers in twelve issues before the fall of the Government, and of these, nine were concerned with foreign affairs.

Whatever editorial principles may have underpinned the decision of the newsreel companies to cover the Government's conduct of international affairs, in so doing they offered opportunities for Labour leaders to maintain a screen presence and to speak not only to British audiences but American, Canadian, Australian, etc., fulfilling thereby an electoral pledge and realising a deeply rooted principle. The short term success of Henderson's foreign policy enabled the Government to bathe in the light of favourable publicity freely given by the newsreels. There was clearly some degree of mutual interest, and while no firm conclusions can be drawn, because of insufficient evidence, it is possible to infer from what there is that the Labour Government not only welcomed such coverage but actively sought it. Indeed, Assistant General Secretary of the Party, J.S. Middleton, was, by mid-1931, arranging with Paramount details of 'General Election Film Propaganda'. It is unclear at whose

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26. LPNEC, National Agent's Report, 27 October 1930. The report noted that publicity work was failing to put Labour's case adequately and was in some cases defeatist in spirit.
27. Labour Party, Labour and the Nation (London, 1928), p.42.

initiative the subject was discussed, but it is not without significance that the Government was, at precisely that moment, considering calling a general election in the autumn or winter of that year, and the Party had drawn up a large amount of publicity material in readiness.(28)

After the fall of the Labour administration the opportunities for making newsreel appearances were considerably fewer. Following the disaster in the October General Election the Labour National Executive and the TUC General Council gave considerable priority to re-establishing the Party's electoral status. Condemning the media's role in 'the unscrupulous misrepresentation of the Labour Party's position' during the election campaign, a joint meeting of the NEC and the General Council, reviewing the events of those weeks, resolved that the public image of the Party needed re-shaping and that the policies and views of the Party were not reaching large sections of the working class.(29)

A campaign was subsequently launched in the autumn of 1932 (having given constituency parties time to recover physically and financially from the election) to promote the new Party programme, give a lead to constituency Parties in preparatory work for the anticipated general election, and to create 'by education and organisation, a mighty force of Socialist faith that will carry Labour to victory'.(30) Several campaigns followed, including a drive to secure a million members; and from 1932 until the 1935 Election both the NEC and the General Council attempted by campaigns and publicity to restore the Party's image and create a basis of political support within the working class based upon 'knowledge and understanding'. Considerable emphasis was given to assisting the Daily Herald's circulation drive, believing that the principal reason for Labour's vote remaining in tact in 1931 was the paper's ability to reach large sections of the working class and counter the misrepresentation of the press.(31)

Equally fundamentally, Labour leaders had, in the aftermath of the 1931 defeat, expressed the view that there was an urgent need, as

28. PRO, Ramsay MacDonald Papers, 30/69/6/34, Middleton to MacDonald, 5 May 1931; LPNEC, NEC Minutes, A.Henderson, 'Report on the General Election', 10 November 1931.
29. LPNEC, NEC Minutes, 10 November 1931; A.Henderson, 'Report on the General Election', 10 November 1931.
30. Ibid., NEC Memorandum, 'Proposed Autumn Campaign', 30 September 1932; LPAR 1932, p.4. For Party publicity generally after the 1931 General Election, see C.T.Stannage, The British General Election

Ernest Bevin put it, for

the spread of knowledge in every possible way in order to get the principles of socialism more deeply rooted in the hearts of the people....there is nothing for it but grim, determined effort and intensive and continuous educational work. (32)

This educational work was pursued in several ways. The New Clarion, for example, was launched to provide publicity for the trade union movement and the Party with a definite socialist character and political purpose, intended to educate as well as inform. Herbert Morrison organised lecture courses in 'socialism' for members of the London Labour Party in 1932-3, to enable them to educate people in 'common-sense socialist ideas'.(33) The culmination of these developments, and probably the single most important focus of Party activity between the 1931 Election and the campaign for the 1935 Election, was the 'Victory for Socialism' campaign.

After campaign work unparalleled in the Party's history, the 'Victory for Socialism' project was envisaged as the 'supreme effort' to achieve power, 'the outstanding immediate task of the Labour Party', which accepted that 'a gigantic task of conversion had to be done before a majority for Socialism can be secured'.(34) In the first phase of the campaign forty-eight mass conferences were held, fifty public meetings, and rallies and demonstrations organised, and special propagandists toured the country apparently addressing over 400 meetings covering over 100 constituencies and area organisations; 900,000 leaflets were distributed door-to-door monthly, together with masses of other types of literature; and even 10,000 10-inch gramophone records of Party leaders'

of 1935 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1972), pp.85 ff. See also, T.J.Hollins, The Presentation of Politics: The Place of Party Publicity, Broadcasting and Film in British Politics, 1918-1939 (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Leeds, 1981), Chapter Two.

31. LPAR 1932, pp.65, 158; LPNEC, NEC Minutes, 30 September 1932; TUC GC, National Joint Council, 19 July 1932; TUC 1932, p.200.
32. Cited, A.Bullock, The Life and Times of Ernest Bevin vol.1, (London, 1960), p.503.
33. Ibid., pp.504-5; TUC 1932, p.200; B.Donoghue, G.W.Jones, Herbert Morrison: Portrait of a Politician (London, 1973), p.188.
34. LPAR 1933, p.4; 1934, p.57; Labour Party leaflet 'Victory for Socialism' October 1933; Labour Organiser, November 1935, p.216.

speeches and Labour songs were made available.(35)

Parallel with this activity were attempts to re-state Labour's position on a multiplicity of issues in response to what both the TUC General Council and the NEC considered a direct challenge by the rise of fascism to social democratic ideas, and its explicit threat to the existence of the Labour movement.(36) The debate on this threat extended to discussion on the dangers of war and its prevention, and was highly sensitive to a

concentrated attack launched in the press, on the platform, in propaganda literature, and over the wireless, by members and supporters of the "National" Government, the object of which is to mislead public opinion into believing that Labour stands for anti-democratic methods of Government....(37)

Publicity in Labour's defence was linked to electoral strategies, and both national leaderships sought new ways to promote their views attractively and convincingly. Forms of publicity considered were photographs, slides, cartoons, badges, posters and postcards, films as well as 'mechanical apparatus of all kinds'.(38)

3.

It was in the context of electoral/educational campaign work and this response to attacks from both Government supporters and the British Fascist movement, that the question of film was considered. After initiating inquiries in December 1932, the Labour Party was offered a daylight cinema van and the services of an operator fully paid for a year by the Daily Herald in return for assistance in the paper's bid to reach a daily circulation of two million readers. The TUC was included in

35. LPNEC, NEC Minutes, 12 July 1934; Research and Publicity Committee Minutes, 22 March 1934, 22 November 1934; LPAR, 1935, pp.24-6. It is difficult to judge how reliable these figures are, since they cannot be verified.
36. See for example, TUC 1933, pp.67-8; 1934, pp.65-6; TUC GC, National Joint Council, 'Campaign for Peace and Freedom and Against War', 25 July 1933.
37. LPNEC, Research and Publicity Committee, 16 December 1933.
38. Ibid.; Joint Meeting of the General Council, the Parliamentary Labour Party and the National Executive Committee, 22 March 1934; TUC 1934, pp.156, 160-1. See also C.T.Stannage, The British General Election of 1935 op.cit., pp.107-8.

this arrangement. Walter Citrine, the TUC General Secretary, appears to have been particularly keen to use film publicity and became personally involved in negotiations with the Herald. He also negotiated with various film companies for the production of 'an industrial cavalcade depicting outstanding events of trade unionism over the past hundred years'. The film was conceived as part of the centenary celebrations of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, the occasion being used by the General Council to publicise trade unionism and social democratic ideas. Though the film was never produced, due to the (understandable) inability of any film company to complete it in time for the celebrations in September 1934, the Council had been prepared to invest up to £5000 for its production, and had enlisted Miles Malleson and H.G.Wells to write a scenario.(39)

Delays in the provision of the Herald's film van allowed the two national organisations time to conduct a thorough survey of the ramifications of utilising film in publicity work. The two principal sources for their subsequent approach to the question were the productions of various documentary film-makers, and the activities of the Socialist Film Council, the first 16mm film production unit to be established within the Labour movement.

Formed in the spring of 1933 by Rudolph Messel, the Socialist Film Council (SFC) consisted of a number of prominent socialists: Raymond Postgate, historian of the Labour movement and former leading member of the National Council of Labour Colleges, was chairman; Daisy Postgate acted as Secretary; Terence Greenidge, a member of the production crew, was a regular contributor to Socialist Review; and George Lansbury, Leader of the Labour Party, was persuaded to act as President. Other socialists of those years, including Naomi Mitchison, became involved in the Council's productions. Lansbury however played no role in the SFC's work, merely being sufficiently interested in the curious spectacle of film-making to allow the Council to use his position as Leader of the Party to attract interest within the movement.(40) Messel, a wealthy businessman who had made his money from oil, provided the funds for the Council, was the director for all its productions, and was the Council's publicist.

39. TUC GC, Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, 20 November 1933, 26 February 1934, 25 June 1934.

40. N.Mitchison, You May Well Ask (London, 1979), p.196. Neither the Lansbury Papers nor the biography by R.Postgate, The Life of George Lansbury (London, 1951), reveal anything of the Council. Messel's papers, in the possession of his widow, Judith Messel, contain nothing relating to the Council.

As film critic for the New Clarion Messel, in March 1933, wrote an article condemning the capitalist film industry for existing 'to make Capitalism seem attractive to the working classes'. He insisted that the only way to counter this propaganda was for the Labour movement to produce its own films. Acknowledging some of the difficulties in producing and showing such films, he appealed to socialists in the possession of 16mm projectors to allow them to be used at public meetings; and for people with cameras to assist by 'securing shots of local conditions' 'showing just how bad things are', which could then be put together in newsreel form and distributed to Labour Parties.(41) The aim was to provide the Labour Party with a film service; and its success was to be dependent upon how widely the Council's films were shown.

His appeal for assistance in projection produced meagre results: only eight people volunteered their equipment. The shooting of local material however was apparently quite successful, in so far as it was claimed that approximately four hundred feet of film had been sent to the SFC by the end of May that year.(42) Two films were initially released in August, both silent on 16mm stock: The Road to Hell and What the Newsreel Does Not Show. Lasting forty minutes, the former, 'a melodrama of the Means Test', tells the story of 'how a family is ground down by the operation of the Test, and how that Test is the source of suicide and crime'.(43) While well produced it uses untypical episodes to generate audience hostility to the Means Test. There is, for example, a failure to analyse the cause of unemployment: the father becomes unemployed not because of rationalisation or closure, but because he was run down by a rich and reckless driver. One tragedy quickly follows another, and the film becomes laden with sentimentality. Offering no guide to action, no solution to the problems raised, it is unintentionally defeatist in its message.

What the Newsreel Does Not Show was envisaged as part of a newsreel series, intended as an aggressive counter to the ordinary commercial newsreels. Lasting thirty minutes, the reel opened with the caption 'This is an attempt by a group of Socialists to show the true

41. New Clarion, 11 March 1933, p.267; 1 April 1933, p.327.

42. Ibid., 27 May 1933, p.486.

43. R.Postgate, 'Making Films to Make Socialists', Labour, September 1933, p.21. The film cost £66 to make.

picture of the world today'. Shots of Council Members were followed by scenes showing the production of The Road to Hell. Then a long sequence, taken by Messel in the Soviet Union, depicted various aspects of the Five Year Plan, including the building and opening of the Dnieperstroy Dam. Shots of London slums were then contrasted with footage (sent in by an English woman) of working class houses in Germany, intended to demonstrate the achievements of German socialists in municipal government. The film ended with more locally-shot footage of various May Day demonstrations. (44)

The SFC was confident that, as Terence Greenidge put it, 'The truth of the Labour Newsreel should ensure its popularity'; and Daisy Postgate a year later claimed that both films

were well liked, and during last winter were booked up to capacity by Labour Parties, which showed them in local halls without much difficulty. (45)

This claim apart, no information is available as to the usage of these films. Produced specifically for exhibition by local Labour Parties, they were shown to delegates at the 1933 Party Conference; and in October the following year the Labour Organiser, the constituency party journal devoted to publicity, electioneering and business matters, announced the Council as 'A New Service for Local Parties'. Be that as it may, there is no evidence in the records of the NEC or the TUC General Council to confirm this; and it seems unlikely that the SFC received official backing.

Paradoxically, at the point when the SFC may have established itself as a 'service' to constituency Labour Parties, it only had one film available for distribution, Blow, Bugles, Blow!. The earlier productions had apparently been in such demand, and had been handled so inexpertly, that all three copies of each were too badly damaged to be used. Blow, Bugles, Blow!, made available in September 1934, was a

44. New Clarion, 27 May 1933, p.486; Socialist Review, September 1933, p.357. An incomplete copy of this film survives.
45. Socialist Review, September 1933, p.357; Daisy Postgate, Labour Organiser, October 1934, p.191.

sound film on 'non-inflammable' 35mm stock, (46) cost Messel £1500 to produce, and, lasting 75 minutes, was a 'peace film, showing how a Labour movement stopped a war' by using the method of a general strike. (47) Although the first two productions were available at a combined cost of £1 10s, Blow, Bugles, Blow! cost £5 to hire, probably pricing the film out of reach of most Labour Party exhibitors, who may have had great difficulties in arranging 35mm exhibition anyway, because of censorship requirements, the film having been banned by the BBFC. While there is no evidence to indicate the extent of its usage, it would appear that, proposing a view contrary to the weight of opinion within the Party, it received little attention from Party organisations, and, according to one report, never had a public showing. (48)

The general approach of the Socialist Film Council appears to have been one of misguided, naive but sincere irresponsibility. Rudolph Messel, its leading personality, was considered by Paul Rotha in 1933 to be 'of the dilettante kind' full of 'sympathy for the working classes', whose first two films were 'amateur and immature'. (49) From descriptions in various journals by participants, the strongest impression is conveyed that the members of the Council were playing at making films. Yet they had some political acumen: they were the first Labour group in Britain to make films on 16mm stock specifically to avoid censorship restrictions; their productions were aimed at a clearly defined audience; and constructed in conscious opposition to the dominant forms of cinema. The Council even defined the most appropriate format for exhibition — urging that their films should be exhibited sandwiched between speakers at party political meetings.

46. Partially 'non-inflammable' 35mm film stocks were available at this time, made of nitrocellulose in combination with acetocellulose, leading to much confusion, for censorship purposes, as to what was, or was not, an inflammable film, and whether it came under the 1909 Act.
47. Labour Organiser, October 1934, p.191. The film was reviewed in Kinematograph Weekly, 16 April 1936, shortly after being trade-shown by the Progressive Film Institute, which had intended to release the film later that year. Interestingly, it was in October 1934 that Attlee considered writing socialist film scripts. See, W.Golant, 'The Emergence of C.R.Attlee as Leader of the Parliamentary Labour Party in 1935', Historical Journal, vol.13 (1970), p.328.
48. R.Cordwell, The Way, December 1966. It did get showings however. The Manchester and Salford Film Society, for example, gave an exhibition of the film in October 1936.
49. P.Rotha, Documentary Diary op.cit., pp.109-10. Ivor Montagu, in an interview with the author, concurred in Rotha's opinion, recalling that Messel was an embarrassment, prepared to offer his money for film projects (which was desirable) yet understandably keen to become involved in their production (which was not).

While the Council was probably regarded with some disdain by the TUC and the NEC the interest in 'propaganda films' within the rank and file which the SFC apparently revealed may have done much to encourage them in their inquiries into film's utility for their various campaigns. Most encouraging of all, in the context of the availability of projection equipment (the cinema van from the Daily Herald), the relatively cheap production of technically proficient films by the SFC cast doubts on the prevailing view that adequate film production was beyond the financial means of either organisation.

The Socialist Film Council probably played some part therefore in making the TUC and the Labour Party's NEC more receptive to the idea that a film service for the movement was feasible. Moreover, the politically inept character of the Council's productions prompted both to seek professional advice, and to conceive of future production in terms of production by professional film-makers sympathetic to the aims of the movement, and under the overall political control of the Labour leadership organising the service.(50)

The main point of reference for the General Council and the NEC was the documentary movement. The history of this movement has been substantially covered, though more by its members and historians of film than by those of social and political history.(51) The British documentary

50. E.Hogenkamp, 'Workers' Newsreels in the 1920's and 1930's', Our History op.cit., p.17, suggests that 'the most striking aspect' of the SFC's history 'is its failure to create a broad movement among Labour organisations that would use film as a means of propaganda'. Three films were hardly sufficient to provide the basis for any 'bread movement', and production discontinued not through lack of money, nor, evidently, through lack of interest in Labour circles, but because the business of making politically-motivated films requires a certain dedication, professionalism and political perspicacity only thinly apparent within the Council. Above all, they were not sufficiently serious, in film production, to see the project through.
51. For introductory surveys by film historians, see A.Lovell, J.Hillier, Studies in Documentary (London, 1972); R.Arnes, A Critical History of British Cinema (London, 1978); R.Low, Films of Comment and Persuasion of the 1930's (London, 1979) and Documentary and Educational Films of the 1930's (London, 1979). The international evolution of documentary is surveyed by E.Barnouw, Documentary (London, 1974). Memoirs include P.Rotha, Documentary Diary op.cit.; H.Watt, Don't Look at the Camera (London, 1974). Interviews with most of the leading documentarists are to be found in E.Sussex (ed.), The Rise and Fall of British Documentary (London, 1975) and E.Orbanz: (ed.), Journey to a Legend and Back (Berlin, 1977).

film was conceived by its exponents as a medium for the communication of public information, with a social purpose. It was intended to make some contribution to the crystallisation of mass social democracy, using film in educative, informational and propagandist roles, geared to social progress. Documentary film was operative at three levels. By the provision of visual information it would assist in the civic education of the 'community' and promote awareness and understanding of the workings and problems of the community's various parts. It was fashioned to influence national opinion-makers and those prominent in the local community, in the workplace, cultural associations, etc., who could influence the ideas and beliefs of ordinary working people. Lastly, it was designed as a means of persuading decision-makers in government and industry as to the need for reform. Of the many disquisitions on documentary by its proponents, the following, written by Paul Rotha in 1935, captures much of the core of the documentary idea:

The immediate task of the documentarist is, I believe, to find the means whereby he can employ a mastery of his art of public persuasion to put the people and their problems, their labour and their service, before themselves. His is a job of presenting one half of the populace to the other; of bringing a deeper and more intelligent social analysis to bear upon the whole cross-section of modern society; exploring its weaknesses, reporting its events, dramatising its experiences and suggesting a wider and more sympathetic understanding among the prevailing class of society. He does not, I think, seek to draw conclusions but rather to make a statement of the case so that conclusions may be drawn. (52)

The documentary movement distinguished itself from the commercial cinema not only by claiming a distinct social function for its films, but by emphasising that these films were identifiably not fiction. The focus was indisputably the 'real world'. But actuality was not merely to be recorded, offering a neutral factual description of a subject: it was to be treated 'creatively', to assist in the film's digestion by an audience, and to facilitate within the cinematic representation of the subject means for the guidance of the audience towards a preferred reading of the film. (53) In practice the sources of finance

52. P. Rotha, writing in 1935, in P. Rotha, S. Road, R. Griffith, Documentary Film 3rd. enlarged ed. (London, 1952), p.115. See also B. Wright, The Long View (St. Albans, 1976), pp.108-9.
53. S. Legg, 'Realist Films', The Journal of the ACT, August-October 1936, p.34; P. Rotha et al, Documentary Film op.cit., pp.115-8.

for documentary films, state departments, industrial corporations, and charitable trusts, imposed certain constraints on production. Consequently, a large proportion of the documentary output was devoted to publicising the various services of the Post Office, under whose auspices the main documentary film unit operated. Much of the remainder was unable to offer little more than description of the numerous social problems they had identified. Differences of approach between individual documentarists necessarily led to considerable differences in the type of documentary produced, ranging from material descriptive of machinery and the work and expertise involved in its production, to reportage on slum life using camera interviews, to didactic film lectures on nutrition using visual aids, to material publicising the Post Office's National Savings scheme using a fictional format. Differences in technique employed raised the question of the nature of documentary and the purposes to which it was to be put. (54)

Nevertheless, one of its fundamental characteristics was its preoccupation with actuality, and, within this perspective, with social problems. The documentary movement established for itself a considerable status within left wing and progressive circles as the repository of political liberalism within the British cinema. Its members considered themselves to be left wing, and carefully nurtured their image of progressivism by emphasising the importance of their self-appointed task of establishing, as Harry Watt, one of the members of the group least given to myth-making, put it, 'the dignity of the ordinary man' on the screen. Stress on the movement's social democratic pedigree served further to establish the credentials of documentary film-makers vis-à-vis the Labour movement and progressive groups. (55)

The documentary movement was an alternative cinematic practice consciously set apart from the commercial cinema. In 1933 there were, according to John Grierson, hardly any recognised documentary directors in Britain apart from Basil Wright, Stuart Legg and Arthur Elton, and 'one or two others'. The success of the first four years of documentary resided not in any cinematic achievement but in firstly the training of a number of individuals, imbued with a reforming zeal and a strong

54. See for example, H. Watt, op.cit., pp.109-10, 186-9.

55. Ibid., pp.39, 47, 191-2. J. Grierson, in his preface to P. Rotha et al, Documentary Film op.cit., p.16.

educational impulse, in the craft of film production. Secondly, in establishing the notion that films could be made independently of the traditional sources of finance open to the cinema trade. By recourse to an ethic of public service, and supported by notions of public relations, government and industry were persuaded to sponsor the production of films for broad social and educational purposes. Thirdly, this success resided in establishing a distinct social function for the cinema, as opposed to the commercial, exploitative function of the medium upheld by the cinema industry as a whole. With the establishment in 1934 of the GPO Film Unit from the film unit of the defunct Empire Marketing Board, and the formation the following year of the first independent (freelance) documentary unit, Strand Films, the documentary movement expanded considerably, and its productions did much to demonstrate cinematically the utility of film for publicity and social purposes. Before 1934 there few successful attempts to present 'the voice of the people speaking from the houses and factories and fields of the people'. (56) With the consolidation of the movement, and a broadening of its perspectives, there were more substantive attempts to produce films which recorded or dramatised the lives of working people. As Grierson observed, 'The documentary of work and workers has found endless possibilities stretching out before it...', and Housing Problems and Workers and Jobs

took the documentary film into the field of social problems, and keyed it to the task of describing not only industrial but social truth as well. (57)

The documentary film-makers were sympathetic to the aims of the Labour Party; and their views were broadly congruent with the ideas and beliefs within the leaderships of the Labour movement. The concern of these film-makers with portraying the lives and problems of working class people at home and at work was received with approval in Labour circles. (58) Just as documentarists were concerned to portray 'social truth', a major thrust of Labour publicity and educational work was to reveal 'the facts' of a particular issue, fundamentally assuming that in so doing the merits and rationality of Labour's case would be self-evidently correct and that eventually, despite media distortion, people would recognise this and act accordingly during the next general election. Similarly, in

56. P.Rotha et al, Documentary Film, op.cit., pp.97, 111, 113.
57. 'Summary and Survey: 1935', in G.Grigson, The Arts Today (London, 1935); 'Battle for Authenticity', World Film News, November 1938.
58. For example, R.Calder, Labour, October 1936, p.35.

affirming the importance and validity of the working class experience, particularly skills and crafts at work, documentarists were tapping workerist ideas - ideas which were formative influences in the perspectives of the Labour movement.

4.

At that point, 1934-5, when documentary rapidly extended its range and clarified its perspectives, the General Council of the TUC and the Labour Party NEC were becoming interested in providing a film service for the Labour movement. There was clearly a certain amount of common ground between these film-makers and Labour leaders. Moreover, a number of documentarists enthused over the idea of such a service. Grierson had already proposed plans to the Labour Party for a Labour film propaganda agency, in 1931. This was rejected at the time by Herbert Morrison. (59) In February 1935 a documentary film exhibition was held at Transport House, resulting in detailed plans being drawn up, with the generous assistance of two documentary film-makers, Paul Rotha and Donald Taylor, for its provision.

The Daily Herald's offer of a film van had prompted a thorough inquiry into the whole question of film publicity, which concluded that running costs would be disproportionately high for the value which could be gained from the work which could be done by one van. Consequently the cinema van was never purchased. (60) Walter Citrine envisaged a more complete service for the movement in which a central office would be established to arrange for the production, distribution and, where necessary, exhibition of films, including special propaganda tours to correspond with particular publicity drives. Several types of exhibition were anticipated, which would require different types of

59. N.Pronay, in his Introduction, in F.Thorpe, N.Pronay, British Official Films in the Second World War: A Descriptive Catalogue (Oxford, 1980), p.30. In the same year Isidore Ostrer offered his controlling shares in Gaumont British Picture Corporation to the Labour Government, but the proposal was similarly rejected. P.Swann, Aspects of the History of the British Documentary Movement, With Special Reference to its Place in the Social History of the 1930's (unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Leeds, 1979), p.15.

60. It would have cost £600 (second-hand). C.T.Stannage, The British General Election of 1935 op.cit., pp.96, 100, 110, 275-6, mistakenly claims that the Party had two cinema vans, both gifts from the Daily Herald, which were used in various campaigns in 1933-4 and during the 1935 General Election.

apparatus (all however were to be sound shows) and the TUC would purchase projection equipment both for hire and use in its own publicity work. A range of films therefore would have to be available which were suitable for these exhibitions - at political meetings, educational classes, conferences, social gatherings - and, for 'normal purposes', a 'distinct entertainment interest' would have to be provided. However the greatest problem, Citrine believed, would be the production of films dealing with the Labour movement. Films could be made of Labour leaders delivering speeches (five minutes), or of important aspects of trade union activity (ten to twelve minutes, costing £300). But the difficulty here would be to produce films

dealing with the Trade Union and Labour Movement which would be of sufficient interest to attract and retain the attention of an audience. (61)

Fortunately, documentary film-makers had offered their assistance in the production of this material. Citrine's memorandum revealed that

Consultations have taken place with a group of people in the movement interested in the question of film production. They are desirous of forming a film company which would produce cultural films for general exhibition on the lines of those which were produced by John Grierson and others under the auspices of the Empire Marketing Board and, later, of the Post Office. The people concerned are confident that there is a demand for these pictures and, providing that any apparent connection of the company with the two national bodies was avoided, they feel that sufficient profit would be made out of this venture to enable them to produce either free of charge or at very low costs propaganda films for the Movement. (62)

These 'people in the movement' were Ritchie Calder, a Daily Herald journalist, J.J. Taylor, Political Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, Donald Taylor and Paul Rotha. (63) No indication is given however of the source for the supply of what Citrine called 'general propaganda'.

The film service was estimated as requiring an initial capital of £3000 and recurring annual costs were estimated at £2000 - for general running, the production of films, and the replacement of old copies.

61. TUC GC, Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, W. Citrine, 'Cinema Films in Trade Union Propaganda', 25 March 1935.

62. Ibid.

63. Paul Rotha, in an interview with the author, 25 January 1978.

Citrine hoped that some assistance would be forthcoming from individual or group unions, which would sponsor films on subjects related to their particular industries. There were considerable problems however in raising the money to finance the project, and though it could be 'of tremendous assistance in organising work', Citrine concluded that

Our income at the moment rules out any development such as is contemplated on the question of modern film propaganda. (64)

The difficulty was not that the scheme cost too much, but that for the previous five years the work of the Council had already been slowly expanding, yet its income had been reduced by over £8000. per year, due mainly to a drop in affiliated membership since 1930 of 450,000. Eager to use film publicity Citrine attempted to secure an increase in affiliation fees, which would barely eliminate the increasing annual deficit, but union responses were unfavourable and the TUC's finances continued to exist on a hand-to-mouth basis.(65)

The Labour Party was in a similar position. The annual income of the Party's General Account, from which all organisational and publicity expenses were paid, never exceeded £50,000 in the 1930's; and it was frequently in deficit.(66) The years 1932 to 1934 were such years. In such circumstances, the Party's income was taken up almost entirely by standing expenses, leaving hardly any spare funds for additional expenditure. From November 1934 it had been preparing for an autumn 1935 general election. Previous campaign work had generally been unsuccessful, in terms of generating enthusiasm amongst divisional Labour Parties for the work involved, and in raising funds from them to finance it.(67) At the point when the Party leadership wished to step up its electoral preparations financial difficulties were compelling it to restrict its activities, with income in 1934 £3000 below that of the previous year.(68)

64. TUC GC, Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, 'Cinema Film in Trade Union Propaganda', 25 March 1935.
65. For the financial position of the TUC, see TUC GC, Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, W.Citrine, Memorandum on TUC Affiliation Fees, 21 June 1935; and 18 February 1936.
66. The information is derived from the statement of Party Accounts in the Labour Party Annual Report for each year, 1929-39.
67. C.T.Stannage, op.cit., pp.108-10.
68. LPNEC, Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, 16 November 1934; NEC Minutes, 'Financial Report for 1934', 23 January 1935.

This was all the more problematic because a considerable number of constituency parties were badly disorganised, increasing the burden of responsibility for propaganda and organisational work on Transport House.(69)

Consequently, as with many other projects, the film scheme was deferred. Nevertheless, Rotha and Donald Taylor proposed the formation of a limited liability company, and appealed to both organisations for assistance in raising the capital needed to launch the business. The Party Executive resolved, in April 1935, to approach 'sympathetic persons' to raise capital of £4000. To improve the chances of raising this money both the General Council and the NEC agreed to guarantee the interest on any money raised, up to £200 per year. The capital was never raised, and the company never materialised.(70)

The project was not abandoned, due largely to the pressure maintained by J.J.Taylor, Paul Rotha and Ritchie Calder; and even John Grierson was recruited to assist in publicising the importance of using film.(71) There was also much encouragement from Trades Councils. These bodies were the principal channel through which TUC propaganda and publicity material was distributed; and if any film scheme was to be successful, then it would need their active support. At the 1935 Trades Councils' Annual Conference a resolution was passed recommending the adoption of more modern publicity methods, and £12,500 be raised each year, by means of a penny levy on each union member. Of this sum, £5,500 would pay for broadcasting from continental stations to Britain, £2000 would pay for newspaper advertising, and the remaining £5,000 would pay for the production of propaganda films. In the first instance, a propaganda film would be produced

of sufficient interest to warrant commercial circulation, yet put the story of Trade Unionism over to the public. (72)

There was clearly a measure of support within local Labour organisations for developing the use of film; and a source of finance was available.

69. C.T.Stannage, op.cit., p.118.

70. P.Rotha, in an interview with the author, 25 January 1978. See TUC GC, Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, 15 April 1935; General Council Minutes, 17 April 1935; LPNEC, Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, 20 May 1935; NEC Minutes, 21 May 1935.

71. 'Getting a Move on the Movies', Labour, February 1936.

72. Report of the Annual Conference of Trades Councils 1935, p.35.

The Labour Party/TUC Film Committee, which had been established in early 1935, issued a circular to Trades Councils in April the following year under the auspices of the National Council of Labour (the joint coordinating committee of the TUC, the Labour Party and the Parliamentary Labour Party), canvassing the formation of a central organisation

for the supply of information, projectors and films to those localities where suitable machinery (for exhibition) can be established. (73)

The circular proposed that in order to avoid 'preaching to the converted' local parties would form film societies open to affiliation by non-Party organisations - trade unions, cooperative societies, branches of the Workers' Educational Association, NCLC groups and individuals. Appended to the circular was a questionnaire requesting details on local conditions: availability of suitable projection equipment for non-theatrical showing, availability of suitable public halls, degree of access to facilities for theatrical showing on Sundays, and likely level of support.

Though the records of the two national organisations reveal little of the preferences of the members of the national Film Committee, there was evidently some debate as to the general emphasis of the proposed film service. Citrine's view as suggested by his report in early 1935, was clearly a cadre approach based on non-theatrical showing in Labour halls, etc., but Geroge Elvin, Secretary of the ACT and a long-standing advocate of Labour film propaganda, speaking in April 1936 at the first annual conference of Kino Films, the left wing 16mm film distributor, revealed that

the official Labour Party attitude to film was that they should produce films which were films first and propaganda second. Distribution of films through the medium of Labour Halls, Trade Halls, Coop. Halls, does not get to the film-going public and is mainly preaching to the converted. Film propaganda must be done through the medium of the commercial cinema. (74)

73. TUC GC, National Council of Labour, Circular no.101, 'Labour Cinema Propaganda', April 1936.
74. Kino News, n.d., May 1936. See also Daily Worker, 27 April 1936, p.8. Elvin was in a position to express the views of the Party, being one of the advisers on the Film Committee.

Frank Jackson, a member of Kino, commenting on the circular, revealed that

Latest information has it that the types of films which will be produced for the commercial market will be one- or two-reelers dealing with such subjects as 'A Day in the Life of a Railway Worker'. (75)

Replies to the questionnaire revealed that 'Up and down the country there are cinema owners and managers who are "with us"'. (76) There were many independent cinema exhibitors, unattached to any cinema circuit. In 1934 there were, according to Rowson, 4,305 cinemas in Britain. By mid-1936, according to one report, approximately 1890 cinemas which belonged to circuits of two or more halls. With over 2400 independently owned cinemas in Britain and over 600 belonging to circuits of fewer than 11 cinemas, there were consequently a large number independent to a greater or lesser extent of the exhibition policies of the large circuits. (77) While the cinema trade generally attempted to 'keep politics off the screen', and the President of the BBFC Lord Tyrrell, amongst others, constantly warned that every effort should be made to resist 'the creeping of politics into films', many independent cinema owners were able to ignore the strictures of those controlling the larger circuits. An example of this measure of independence is the widespread exhibition of Rotha's Peace of Britain, which, after much publicity concerning the intervention of the BBFC, was shown, according to one report, in 570 cinemas. (78)

Evidently there were a number of cinema owners sympathetic to the Labour Party who were prepared to permit the exhibition of film

75. Left Review, June 1936, p.477. Using 'rumour' as evidence needs to be qualified; in this case Jackson's information was apparently quite reliable, there being several proposals made to produce this type of film at later meetings of the Film Committee in the 1937-9 period.
76. R.Calder, Labour, October 1936, pp.35-6.
77. This information is taken from F.D.Klingender, S.Legg, Money Behind the Screen (London, 1937), p.21. The reliability of this source is uncertain. H.E.Browning, A.A.Sorrell, 'Cinemas and Cinema-Going in Great Britain', Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, vol.117, 1954, p.141, claimed that as late as 1951 1556 cinemas remained outside circuit control.
78. J.Reeves, The Film and Education, op.cit., p.15. See also Report of the Annual Conference of Trades Councils 1936, p.18.

material provided by the proposed Labour film service. The 26 cinema circuit owned by Sidney Bernstein, who had been a Party member since 1919 and at various times a Labour Councillor, may have been open to the Party. There were also of course, the dozen or so cooperative cinemas, and the cinemas owned by Labour organisations such as Bedwas Workmen's Hall Institute, the Morpeth Miners' Hall, the Cooperative Hall owned by Long Buckley Self Assistance Industrial Society, and the Popular Picture Palace owned by Miles Platting (Manchester) Independent Labour Party. (79) No evidence is available to indicate which cinemas were open to the Party, nor as to precisely what their owners were prepared to show, or in what context: favourable replies may simply have been confined to offers to open these cinemas for use on Sunday afternoons on a strictly commercial basis, as was the usual practice with film societies. Replies to the questionnaire revealed however that thirty-five Labour groups were suitable for 'immediate development', but only for 16mm non-theatrical exhibition. The view of Citrine subsequently prevailed and the new film scheme, as Ritchie Calder announced in November 1936, was to be 'based entirely on non-theatrical distribution'. Divisional Labour Parties were to sponsor Film Guilds, which would equip themselves with 16mm sound projectors. The Guilds would act as

discussion groups bringing not only Labour Party members, Trade Unionists, Cooperators and social workers together, but attracting also the marginal or unconverted electors. (80)

There were, it was considered, sufficient documentary films available to make the scheme immediately practicable; and these films would be used 'to create a "social conscience" and a reforming ideal in the potential voters'. There was some confusion of purpose regarding these films. Calder explained that these documentary films were suitable mainly for making people hitherto uncommitted 'alive to the need for reform', and were therefore more suitable for exhibition in cinemas. (81) More

79. Information on these and others is to be found in Kinematograph Year Book, the official trade directory. These halls were not simply halls with projectors and screens, giving a weekly show, but cinemas with daily programmes. The Popular Picture Palace, for example, gave two shows nightly, and three matinee performances every week.
80. R. Calder, 'Federation of Film Guilds for the Labour Party', World Film News, November 1936, p.29. There are no details of this scheme in the records of the two national organisations.
81. R. Calder, Labour, loc.cit., p.36.

appropriate for non-theatrical showings were 'films which educate the converted in the ideals and objectives of Socialism'. This type was to consist of 'the broad propaganda or instructional films explaining, illustrating and underlining the Socialist policy'. Yet the 'essential' films for this function were, according to Calder, documentaries; and he gave examples: Drifters, Lancashire at Work and Play, Citizens of the Future, Shipyard and Enough to Eat?. (82) Finally, a third category of films was to be produced:

films which are straight-from-the-shoulder propaganda using hard-hitting arguments which carry conviction among the unconverted, and win elections. (83)

There was a distinct electoral emphasis in the scheme. Eventually, it was hoped, every constituency Labour Party in Britain would be equipped with projection apparatus so that during elections 'films could be used as a mass attack'. No reference was made to daylight cinema vans, and street corner meetings of the type arranged by the Conservative and Unionist Films Association appear to have been rejected as a tactic for publicity. The projector recommended by the Film Committee was portable however, and it was envisaged that Film Guilds would arrange indoor shows throughout their localities as part of the normal publicity work of the Party during elections.

The main task of the Film Guilds was to perform a cadre function. As Calder explained:

Winning votes may be important, but initiating and instructing people in what are the ideals, the practical policy and programme and the true objectives of Socialism are more so. (84)

Despite a certain confusion regarding the appropriateness of documentary films for theatrical exhibition, their main value, according to Calder, was in education and instruction. It must be recalled here that he was not arguing a case but publicising the new scheme of the Party and the TUC. Echoing Philip Snowden's observation quoted earlier in this chapter that it wasn't simply a question of educating those who were not members

82. R. Calder, Labour, loc.cit.

83. R. Calder, 'Federation of Film Guilds for the Labour Party', World Film News, loc.cit.

84. Ibid.

of the Party, or who were not ardent trade unionists, but raising also the level of understanding and knowledge of the 'converted', the film scheme recognised that much of the Party's support derived from class loyalty, from blind faith in the party of the working class, rather than from any articulated political opinions or considered support for its policies. This approach coincided with the perspectives behind the 'Victory for Socialism' campaign, and reflected current thinking in the Party as to the main tasks confronting the Party in the post-1935 situation.

There was a continuing need to 'create a mighty force of socialist faith', educating the people in the ideas and values which formed the fabric of social democratic philosophy. But there was also a need to prepare the ground for a sudden electoral contest. Reviewing the political situation in May 1936 the Party's Publicity Department decided to inaugurate a sustained campaign to promote party support on the assumption that

the position of the Government is such as to justify the Labour Party in planning its work now on the basis of election preparations. (85)

There was a certain degree of political neurosis within the Labour Party leadership after 1935. Confident that the Government was losing support, it was concerned that there were no strong indications that the Party was growing proportionately in stature in the country.(86) The Party could not afford to be caught by a snap election. Nor could it risk the possibility of losing a general election a third consecutive time. A considerable emphasis in publicity work therefore was placed on educating the public in the Party's 'socialist' ideals, and on instructing Party workers and sympathisers, in cadre fashion. Consequently, after a prolonged literature campaign very similar to the 'Victory for Socialism' drive, a National Campaign was launched in the autumn of 1937 after months of planning,

- (1) To inspire and equip all ranks of the Party for the greatest and most intense effort in its history;
- (2) To increase the affiliated membership of the Party; and

85. LPNEC, Press and Publicity Department Memorandum, 20 May 1936.

86. Ibid. The total individual membership of the Party increased by nearly 30,000 between 1935 and 1937 to a peak of 447,150, but by 1939 had dropped by nearly 40,000 to 408,844.

- (3) To secure such widespread public support for the policy of the Party that a majority Labour Government, with an understanding electorate behind it, will take office after the General Election. (87)

It was in the context of these strategies that the Film Guild system was devised. Despite claims however that

the leading documentary film directors and producers ... will be available for the type of film which we propose to sponsor and promote. (88)

no orders were placed with the two independent documentary production units which existed at the end of 1936, Strand Films and Realist Film Unit; and the Film Conference convened at the 1936 Party Conference to publicise the scheme and persuade divisional Labour Parties to purchase equipment was a failure. (89) Expected to commence in the winter of 1936-7 the scheme was again deferred, though not on this occasion for financial reasons.

While the service would advise in the procurement of projection equipment and even offer such equipment for sale on favourable terms, it had long been assumed that the burden of responsibility for the acquisition of such equipment rested with local Labour organisations, and, specifically, constituency Parties. There were serious doubts as to the interest in the scheme within these local Labour groups, and only a small number had possession of suitable projection equipment. Moreover, the Film Committee recorded in mid-1937 that

At this stage there seems little likelihood of Local Labour and Trade Union Organisations being able to purchase projectors. (90)

87. IPAR 1936, pp.81-2; 1937, p.21.
88. R. Calder, Labour, loc.cit.
89. P. Rotha, in an interview with the author. According to Rotha not a single order was made for equipment. Despite his own talk to the Conference, which provided a pithy class analysis of the cinema industry, delegates displayed little interest in using film as a political weapon. The text of Rotha's talk was published in pamphlet form, Films and the Labour Party (London, 1936).
90. LPNEC, Joint Film Committee Minutes, 22 July 1937. No figures are available for the numbers of projectors in the possession of Labour groups. Constituency Parties appear to have been in serious

The network of Film Guilds had failed evidently to materialise and, with unfavourable financial circumstances and greater priorities in other means of publicity, the launching of the scheme appeared to both national organisations unjustifiable:

We have felt all along that in the absence of facilities for showing films of a special character of interest to audiences we represent, no good purpose would have been served in spending large sums of money on producing films which would have not been acceptable to the commercial cinema proprietors. (91)

Nor was it simply a case of Labour Parties hiring projection apparatus from other working class organisations. Only a small number of branches of the Workers' Educational Association, for example, possessed sound projection equipment, the majority hiring it from cooperative societies, schools or commercial sources. Moreover, Labour halls were not always the most suitable for exhibition, even if projection equipment was available. As the WEA explained in its evidence to the Cinematograph Advisory Committee to the Home Office on the question of the censorship of 16mm film exhibitions:

Even in the largest towns, the problem of finding suitable meeting places [for exhibiting films] at a cost within the means of those interested is always difficult, often insuperable. (92)

Nor were Labour and social clubs always available for showing films. According to evidence given by a representative of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union to this Advisory Committee, working men's clubs did not arrange film exhibitions as a regular part of their activities — indeed, such shows 'were few and far between'. Presumably, therefore, of the

financial difficulties. The City of Leeds Labour Party, for example, found that in 1937 'the normal income of the Party is not yet large enough to finance its routine work'. Annual Report of the Executive Committee of the City of Leeds Labour Party, 1937, p.39. The same situation arose the following year, ibid., 1938, p.39.

91. LPNEC, National Joint Film Committee, 'National Film Service', 24 March 1938.
92. PRO HQ, HQ 45 21109/695383/73, Workers' Educational Association, 'The Use of Non-Inflammable Films', 23 February 1939, (evidence submitted to the Cinematograph Advisory Committee to the Home Office, 3 March 1939).

2800 clubs in Britain 'the vast majority being social clubs', very few, if any, possessed projection equipment.(93)

5.

Interest in a Labour film scheme was however growing. Evidence of this is suggested by the expansion of Kino Films' collection of sound films and the extension of their field of operations - by mid-1937 they had agents who could give shows in nearly every major city and town in England. So successful were Kino's films in drawing people to meetings and helping to raise funds that the NACEC Film Department hired several for its contribution to the cooperative movement's 'Milk for Spain' campaign. Following this initiative local constituency Parties gave over 160 shows of films within three months as part of the Labour Party's own Spain Campaign.(94) Even Head Office discovered that it could put on regular exhibitions of films at Transport House.(95) Furthermore, the Party's Spain Campaign Committee quickly realised that there was a tremendous interest across the country in seeing The Spanish Earth. Accordingly, the Committee instructed local Parties to arrange collections outside cinemas wherever the film was being shown, and to assist in publicity for its exhibition.(96)

93. PRO HQ, HQ 45 21109/695383/73, Working Men's Club and Institute Union, 'Summary of evidence to be submitted (to the Cinematograph Advisory Committee to the Home Office)', n.d.; Cinematograph Advisory Committee, Minutes of the Fourth Meeting of the Committee, 3 March 1939, Evidence of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union.
94. LPNEC, National Joint Film Committee, 'National Film Service', 24 March 1938.
95. New Leader, 17 April 1936, p.6. These shows, dating from early 1936, were apparently very popular. An example of the type of programme arranged is one for 18 April 1936: End of St. Petersburg, USSR (Intourist, 1935) and Peace of Britain, five performances of which were given. Head Office even began to acquire copies of films in anticipation of the establishment of a central film service, buying, for example, four copies of Peace of Britain, and one of Millions of Us, produced by American trade unionists in 1936.
96. LPNEC, Spain Campaign Committee Minutes, 8 February 1938.

Perhaps revitalised by Herbert Morrison's vigorous organisation of Labour's National Campaign (to launch the campaign 5000 meetings were arranged in one week alone, according to one report)(97) and impressed by the obvious success of the NACEC's Film Department, the Film Committee of the TUC and the Labour Party became convinced that there was a widespread interest within the movement for showing Labour films, and sufficient projectors available to justify the existence of a central service. The TUC appears to have been increasingly impressed by the productions of the documentary movement which 'show graphically how the wage-earners live and work'. The need to arrange for the production of such films was considered to be 'a problem of first importance'.(98) In October 1937 the Party's Publicity Committee strongly recommended to the NEC that, in view of the Film Committee's findings, 'the fullest possible assistance, financially and otherwise' should be given to the Film Committee to establish the film service.(99) Consequently a National Joint Film Committee, which included representatives from the NACEC, was set up authorised to establish the service. The Committee first met in January 1938, and the Workers' Film Association commenced operations on October 1st that year.

The membership of this Committee, suggesting the seriousness with which both national organisations approached the subject, included Chairman Harold Elvin, Chairman of the TUC General Council in 1938; Sir Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the TUC and the dominant figure in the trade union movement; Vincent Tewson, the TUC's Assistant General Secretary; W.W.Henderson, Head of the Labour Party's Press and Publicity Department since 1920; Maurice Webb, a Party Propaganda Officer; Ellen

97. LPAR 1937, p.193. Morrison was a keen publicist with much experience of organising public relations exercises and using professional advertising consultants, and clearly brought fresh ideas to the Party's wilting Campaign Committee. See B.Donoghue, G.W.Jones, Herbert Morrison: Portrait of a Politician op.cit., pp.207-10.
98. TUC 1937, p.196.
99. LPNEC, Joint Film Committee, Memorandum, 22 July 1937; Memorandum, 'The Future of the National Campaign', October 1937.

Wilkinson, who had many contacts with the film trade; Joseph Reeves, Secretary of the NACEC Film Department; David Mason, Chairman of the NACEC; J.J. Taylor, Political Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union; George Elvin, Secretary of the Association of Cinematograph Technicians; T.O. Erien, Secretary of the National Association of Theatrical and Kine Employees; and Paul Rotha.

In order to avoid duplication of effort, ease the financial burdens of each sponsoring body, and establish as wide a representation of the Labour movement as possible, moves were made by the Committee to secure the involvement of the Workers' Travel Association, the WEA, the Cooperative Union and the Cooperative Wholesale Society. Estimating that the Workers' Film Association would need £1000 per year for two years to become established (and thereafter self-supporting), the NEC and the General Council resolved to fund the service on the principle of equal sponsorship, and both agreed to provide £250 per year for those two years, on the assumption that other organisations represented on the Committee would comply. None did, the WTA and the WEA were unable to afford that level of funding; and the CU and the CWS refused to participate in the Association. Moreover, due to the unwillingness of these two latter organisations, the NACEC was also reluctant to sponsor the service. Consequently, although it was involved in the formation of the Workers' Film Association, the NACEC performed no decision-making role, and the service, despite strenuous efforts to secure representation of the bulk of the Labour movement, was funded and directed only by the Labour Party and the TUC, in implicit competition with the NACEC Film Department and the CU/CWS National Film Service. (100)

100. The CU and the CWS were determined that if any organisation of the Labour movement was going to provide that movement with a film service, then their own was the most appropriate. They subsequently argued that the WFA should merge with the National Film Service, under CU/CWS management and subject to their policy decisions. Neither the NEC nor the General Council could agree to this, considerable resentment was generated, and the stalemate was interrupted only by the war, on the outbreak of which the cooperative organisations dropped the question completely. For the negotiations over the issue, see LPNEC, National Joint Film Committee Minutes, 7 October 1938; TUC GC, General Council Minutes, 22 March 1939; Education Committee Minutes, 9 May 1939.

Installed in two rooms in Wardour Street above the ACT offices, Reeves and his one assistant were entrusted with formidable tasks. They had to encourage local Parties, union branches and cooperative societies as well as national Labour organisations, to use films generally - a habit to which they were largely not accustomed. To assist them in this they provided a wide range of films from the commercial libraries, the Association not having an adequate film library until mid-1939; and offered guidance and advice regarding the types of film and equipment available and the technical problems involved in exhibition. Equipment was offered for sale or hire, at highly competitive prices, or hire purchase; and roadshow facilities were provided for those groups which neither could afford equipment nor had access to it. For those Labour organisations wishing to sponsor film production the WFA offered its services as agent, providing advice, drawing up scenarios, engaging production companies, etc. As the Association was also a production unit, it had to encourage Labour organisations to commission WFA productions; trade unions in particular were expected by the TUC to provide funds for the production of documentaries related to the work of their members in specific industries. The WFA was expected to integrate its film work generally with the political needs of the Labour Party's NEC.(101)

As with the Film Guild scheme exhibition was conceived in terms of non-theatrical showing in Labour clubs and halls; and production, in terms of 16mm sound film. In practice occasional shows were given using 35mm films obtained from the Progressive Film Institute, which also distributed this material for the Association.

The WFA was expected to operate at two levels: as an eventually self-supporting company providing a film service for the Labour movement in competition with the commercial cinema; and as a political agency augmenting the publicity work of the TUC and the Labour Party. The WFA also functioned to cater for Labour social gatherings and educational classes, providing programmes of films from a wide selection of interest, travelogue, entertainment and educational material. In its first catalogue the WFA offered 31 sample 'educational and entertainment' programmes, including films ranging from documentaries such as Changes in the Franchise,

101. Rules of the Workers' Film Association Ltd. (London, 1939); Workers' Film Association Catalogue, Films and Equipment for Education and Propaganda (London, 1939); LPNEC, National Joint Film Committee, 'National Film Service', 24 March 1938.

and Great Cargoes, to newsreel and topical magazines, Pathe Super Gazette and Pathetone Weekly, to popular fiction films such as Great Expectations and The Good Companions, and cartoons such as Popeye and Mickey. An average programme ran for two hours, and cost £2 15s.

The provision of these types of film derived from a number of sources. Firstly, the belief that film attracted people to meetings (of whatever sort). Secondly, the residual workerism of many of the active members of the Labour movement prompted a belief in the need for the working class to develop its own culture, and for it to do so through its own organisations and with its own methods. Thirdly, and perhaps the most significant, it was apparent to Reeves and the Film Committee that no substantial political/educational film usage would materialise unless Labour groups could develop a routine of film exhibition and attract a body of interest in and support for Labour film shows. At its most basic the WFA functioned to attract workers to meetings. Attracting them to social and educational gatherings was a means of strengthening cultural and community bonds, and thereby consolidating 'worker-culture'. But it was also a necessary prelude to encouraging people to participate in educational/political activities and to attend political meetings. The film show, irrespective of the films shown, was another medium for Labour publicity in its broadest sense, of publicising Labour's organisational presence. More importantly, it was perceived as an organisational tactic. Thus, for example, Joseph Reeves explained that

The Workers' Film Association will not be content until the great gifts which working people make to Society are pictorially portrayed for all to see, so as to make up for the neglect of centuries.....

Film Societies for showing and producing films should be formed for the purpose of propagating the principles of Socialism, Cooperation and Trade Unionism. Summer and weekend schools to discuss film production should be organised. If this is done, gradually we shall find the Workers' Movement becoming film-minded. Obsolete methods of propaganda will then be discarded for this more potent medium. The competition of the wireless and cinema will no longer be the bane of the organiser of propaganda. (102)

Equally revealing regarding the function of the WFA is the following statement by J.W.French, Secretary of Clay Cross Labour Party, in which he explained that the Party intended to use WFA films

- (a) To increase the attraction to public meetings.
- (b) For educational purposes.
- (c) To maintain interest among the branch members, and to aid League of Youth activity.
- (d) For augmenting the programmes at social activities. (103)

Rhetoric though there may have been in the press release by Reeves, his statement, and that of French, reveals the cadre function of the WFA (though there is a vague implication by Reeves that ultimately the WFA would create a mass audience for its shows). Reeves indicates the long-term nature of the project for which the WFA assumed responsibility of building up an independent working class film culture. No evidence has been found to suggest that this 'independence' was to extend to the production of entertainment material, or even that the full implications of 'independence' were thought through. Clearly influenced by cooperative ideas, this notion of independence considered that the exhibition of films to the Labour movement and the working class should also be conducted by organisations of that movement, in direct competition with the 'capitalist cinema', even though much of the material offered for consumption may have been of 'capitalist' origin.

The distinctly political orientation of the Workers' Film Association was derived from the electoral/educational perspectives informing the approach of both the Labour Party NEC and the TUC General Council. In November 1938 the National Campaign Committee considered that a general election would probably take place the following year, either in February or early autumn, and instructed Head Office to prepare publicity and organise propaganda work in readiness for the earlier date.(104) The Press and Publicity Department had already been drawing up plans for election publicity, and, with screen publicity under its broad direction, arrangements were being made in the autumn of 1938 for the production of a film dealing with Labour's Immediate Programme,

103. Labour Organiser, May 1939, p.87.

104. LPNEC, Campaign Committee Minutes, 18 November 1938.

the electoral programme laid down in early 1937.(105) Although no election took place in February the following year, the use of film propaganda as part of the joint campaign of the Labour Party and the Cooperative Party against the National Government was strongly recommended by Labour's campaign organisers, and the WFA kept

in constant touch with the Publicity Department of the Labour Party on the question of film propaganda prior to the anticipated General Election. (106)

In March that year the WFA devised a scheme for the production of one-and-a-half minute films for exhibition in cinemas during an election, and invited candidates to volunteer (presumably, with local Party sponsorship). It was envisaged that a candidate would deliver a speech on film stating his/her views on current issues; but the scheme had to be abandoned after consultations with the cinema trade revealed that there was a ban on party political propaganda.(107) The Association also undertook to provide short films of Party leaders for the election. A further scheme was devised for the production and use of film in marginal constituencies. The films, illustrating various aspects of the Party's policies, were to be offered freely as part of a complete service, which included an operator, equipment and a programme of films, to selected constituencies. The Association was to produce these films and the Party, sanctioning the preparation of up to twelve mobile units in readiness, financed the scheme with £1500 from its General Election Fund.(108)

105. LPNEC, Joint Film Committee Minutes, 4 August 1938. Finance for the film was provided anonymously by a member of the Party. There is only indirect evidence to suggest that it was ever completed; none to indicate which organisation was involved in its production.
106. B.Ayrton Gould, Labour, February 1939, p.8; TUC Library, Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association Annual Report 1939.
107. TUC Library, Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association Annual Report 1939; LPNEC, Press, Publicity and Campaign Committee, 'Film Publicity', 18 July 1939.
108. LPNEC, National Joint Film Committee Minutes, 21 March 1939; Finance and General Purposes Committee, 'General Election Film Propaganda', 20 April 1939. None of these mobile units were daylight cinema vans, which, costing over £1000 each, were far too expensive for Party resources. The films of various Party leaders were never completed, though the short films illustrating Party policies were apparently ready for the election. These have not survived.

Finally, a film was made of Labour Party leaders (Attlee, Morrison, Greenwood and Dalton) on 35mm stock, though it is unclear whether the WFA produced it, or which organisation financed its production. The film was available for use by the WFA, although its completion was held in abeyance until a dissolution was announced, only needing to be reduced to 16mm and a 'topical commentary' recorded for its completion.(109)

As no election took place the electoral role of the Association was overshadowed by its other functions. Apart from distributing educational, cartoon and fiction films, the WFA offered a wide range of social and political films. Sample programmes in its catalogue included four films from the Workers' Travel Association, at least ten documentaries from the British Commercial Cass Association and Gaumont British Instructional, productions from the London Cooperative Societies, and fourteen films from the collection of Kino Films, whose entire library was placed at the Association's disposal.(110) Charges for films were 5s per 16mm reel and 12s per 35mm reel. Where equipment and an operator were hired from the WFA an additional charge of £4 10s was made for a single performance, and £3 for each of a series of consecutive performances. As good sound projectors cost upwards of £125 it is not surprising that only between twenty five and thirty five cooperative societies and trade union organisations possessed them. However, as discussed earlier, through Reeves' contacts arrangements were made for the joint ownership or usage of many projectors and other equipment in the possession of Labour and cooperative groups. While film hire was relatively cheap it is therefore difficult to assess the degree to which film exhibition was within the reach of most local Labour groups. The cost of projection equipment was generally prohibitive - especially for Parties hoping to attract audiences of around 1000 - 2000 for public meetings, where the projection 'throw' needed for such large audiences required equipment costing approximately £400.(111) Whether due to this type of difficulty or indifference the number of road shows and film hirings was small during

109. LPNEC, Finance and General Purposes Committee Minutes, 20 April 1939; Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association Annual Report 1939.

110. Labour Press Service, no.1021, 18 January 1939, Supplement; Workers' Film Association Catalogue, Films and Equipment for Education and Propaganda op.cit. Kino's entire library was given to the WFA in 1941.

111. Labour Organiser, May 1939, pp.86-7.

the WFA's first year, and poor in comparison with the achievements of the NACEC Film Department. Although total sales were in excess of £5400, road shows provided only £337 of this, and film hire £236. Programmes were hired from the Association on 95 occasions; and 31 roadshows were given.(112) Of interest here is that there were at least 63 hirings of Advance Democracy from the Association - that is, two thirds of all film hire transactions involved this film.(113) Some indication of the custom for the service is suggested in the following list of Labour organisations which hired material from or arranged roadshows by the WFA, in a randomly chosen period of two consecutive weeks in April 1939.(114)

Film Hire: Nottingham Cooperative Society
 Stockton CS
 Finchley Labour Party
 Pontypridd and District Educational Settlement
 NACEC
 Kino Films
 Clay Cross LP
 Ipswich and District Trades Council and LP
 Trades Union Congress
 Brightside and Carbrook CS

Road Shows: West Layton LP
 East Ham South LP
 United Jewish Workers' Association
 Hatfield and Broad Oak LP
 Hexham LP
 Sowerby LP
 Enfield Highway CS

Disappointed though Reeves was at the poor response, and there was a general feeling that many trade unions in particular were still unaware of the WFA's sponsorship by the TUC and the Labour Party, the first year's work was considered an overall success. A gross trading profit of £1130 was achieved which, after office expenses were deducted, revealed a pre-tax surplus on the year's account of £230.(115)

112. Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association Annual Report 1939; Cashbook 1938-9.

113. Ibid., Ledger. The General Council's Report to Congress in September 1939 referred to 'some thousands of film hirings' having been arranged.

114. Ibid., Cashbook 1938-9. Eight other organisations made similar transaction during the same period, but are unidentifiable; and three more hired equipment.

115. Ibid., Annual Report 1939.

Of the £5460 revenue 90% was derived from production and sales of equipment. Acting as agent for the London Cooperatives, the WFA arranged for the Realist Film Unit to produce People With A Purpose and Voice of the People, engaging Ritchie Calder to write the scenario for the latter. Camberwell Borough Council commissioned the Association to produce a film on municipal services, emphasising A.R.P.(116) The sound film, Camberwell is Prepared, costing £350 and lasting 30 minutes, was made direct on 16mm stock, directed by Reeves, and exhibited each day for a month in August 1939 by the WFA, which hired a daylight cinema van from Kino for the purpose. Two trade unions were persuaded in April 1939 to sponsor the production of films: the National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants and the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers. Neither of these films was completed before 1940; and merit only brief attention. NATSOPA's Jubilee was made to celebrate the union's past and presented its early struggles, its contemporary role, and various union personalities discussing the union's achievements. The sound film was scheduled to last twenty minutes, and was made for £200. The Builders 'deals with the life of the builder and the story of the benefits which trade unionism confers upon the rank and file member'. Costing £350 the sound film was shot direct on 16mm stock and lasts thirty minutes.(117) Several other unions were approached by Reeves without success - though this may have been due more to the threat of war than to lack of interest, or insufficient funds. Other films produced by the WFA included Sport for the British Workers Sports Association, and The Children's Republic for the Woodcraft Folk - both silent shorts; and an advertising short was prepared for Grays Cooperative Society. A series of WFA trailers was issued for use by cooperative societies and trade union branches at the end of their film exhibitions urging audiences to become more involved in society/union activities. Finally, a Workers' Film Association Newsreel was produced, which included footage of the 1939 May Day demonstration.

Just as production by the Association was neither prolific nor ambitious, the 'large budget' films being handed over to the Realist Film Unit, the sale of equipment was poor. The cheapest sound projector made available by the WFA cost approximately £130; and as the Association's equipment sales amounted to £2180 no more than 16 projectors could have been sold.

116. Information on this film is derived from the Workers' Film Association Annual Report 1939.
117. For a review of The Builder see Documentary News Letter, June 1940, p.8.

All aspects of the Workers' Film Association's activities in its first year of operations were of very modest proportions indeed. Reeves and the National Joint Film Committee were reasonably satisfied with the results. Reeves even considered that had it not been for the outbreak of war the future of the WFA would have been 'very rosy'.(118) Meagre though the Association's achievements were its work needs to be assessed as part of a long-term project to build up a substantial and well-informed workers' film culture within the Labour movement. The Association, in this context, had made a start of sorts in 1938-9. Its main achievement in 1939 was to have survived the outbreak of hostilities. This foundation proved of great value during the war, when its scope of operations expanded considerably. However, the high level of interest in film which the WFA attempted to satisfy during the war did not survive its conclusion, and the Association appears to have subsequently gone into a decline. By the late 1940's many of those involved in various aspects of the WFA's work were engaged in a discussion concerning the lack of interest in the service it had provided, implying that ultimately the Association had failed in its long-term aims.(119)

6.

The Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress responded to the evolution of film as a medium of political communication in several distinct but related ways. Firstly, the medium's facility for conveying in powerful images the propaganda of the movement's political opponents prompted on the one hand a profound distrust of commercial cinema, and on the other an acceptance that Labour could only oppose effectively the

118. Workers' Film Association Papers, Workers' Film Association Annual Report 1939. Reeves' estimate was probably accurate: by 1941, in face of 'competition' from the Ministry of Information, which issued similar material free of charge, the WFA's film hire in the last six months of the year was five times as great as that for the 1938-9 year, and 62 roadshows were given in one month alone. Workers' Film Association Annual Report 1941.
119. V.Tewson, The NFA Journal, September-October 1948, pp.6-7; A.Bax, 'Can Films Win Votes?', ibid., November-December 1948, pp.14-5. The WFA folded in February 1948, becoming the National Film Association, representing the TUC, the Labour Party and the Cooperative Wholesale Society.

overt party political propaganda of the Conservative Party and the National Government, and challenge the general representation of working class people in the commercial cinema, by recourse to the medium itself. Such considerations, in the context of the general character of Labour publicity, and the political predicament facing the Labour Party in the 1931 - 1939 period, determined an essentially political, utilitarian conception of film's value for Labour.

Coinciding with developments in the field of educational and instructional film, and in the context of the 'educational' thrust of much of Labour publicity work, the two Labour leaderships, secondly, were interested in the medium's suitability for instruction and education in the principles of socialism. This interest grew proportionately as the cost of production and exhibition dropped, with the arrival of a reliable 16mm sound film stock (Kodak first issued such a stock in 1933), the expansion of the 16mm market and the availability of cheap films and projection equipment, and with the crisis in the British film industry in 1937.⁽¹²⁰⁾ These factors made a Labour film service appear financially feasible. The rapid development of documentary film after 1933 offered a form of cinematic representation which was considered by members of the Labour Film Committee most appropriate for Labour's purposes. This was due in part to the professional concern of several documentarists with working class life and work, to the political motivation of two of these in particular, Paul Rotha and Donald Taylor, and to the technique of realism to which documentary so enthusiastically subscribed. Such a service was attractive because it would not only sidestep the commercial cinema trade, but offered the possibility of building up a practice of Labour film exhibition as an integral part of the social and cultural as well as the political life of the Labour movement.

Thirdly, and determined to a large extent by these perspectives, there was a rejection of the commercial cinema as a source for film publicity. Interest was shown in that forum, and there was a longing to produce a first class film which could reach mass audiences. However,

120. LPNEC, National Joint Film Committee, 'National Film Service', 24 March 1938.

the financial and political implications of commercial exhibition, as well as the practical problems which would arise, precluded any serious attempt to secure this type of film exhibition. The non-theatrical strategy was in practice only partially independent of the commercial cinema, but the electoral/educational approach which was adopted reflected the established conception of Labour propaganda and publicity work. The medium was considered suitable for both a 'mass attack in every constituency', and for cadre work in educating activists, local leaders, sympathisers, etc., who were in positions to influence through their more direct, day-to-day contact, larger numbers of 'unconverted' people than party meetings could ever reach.

Given this level of interest, very general though it was, how then can we account for the considerable discrepancy between the Labour Party and the Conservative Party in their use of film in the 1930's? The latter was in a more advantageous position to utilise the medium. Manifestly wealthier as an organisation, it also had access to greater private financial resources than either the Labour Party or the TUC. Leading Conservatives had many close contacts with prominent individuals in the cinema industry, and a degree of access therefrom to film production, equipment and advice. Sir Albert Clavering, the Director of the Conservative and Unionist Films Association was a major figure in the British commercial cinema. He was assisted and advised in film production for the CFA by Michael Balcon and Alexander Korda, two leading film producers at major British film studios. Others involved included Sir Gordon Craig and Gerald Sanger of British Movietone News.(121) Such advantages were extremely important, but they do not nevertheless fully account for this disparity.

Several documentary film-makers who had dealings with both Parties have concurred in the view expressed by Basil Wright that

121. See Kinematograph Weekly, 19 April 1934, p.3; 7 November 1935, p.27. See also T.J.Hollins, 'The Conservative Party and Film Propaganda Between the Wars' loc.cit.

the most difficult people to make films for were the so-called progressives - the trade unions, the coops., the socialist administrators.... (122)

Where the Conservative leaders were adventurous and keen to use the most modern methods of publicity, the leaders of the Labour Party were hesitant and cautious. Aware that keeping publicity methods up-to-date was in itself a form of publicity, contributing to the public image of the organisation, the Labour Party leadership was nevertheless, as Grierson observed, essentially distrustful of 'information services other than its very own'.(123) Paul Rotha, broadening the argument, has commented somewhat bitterly that

in the 1930's the unions and the cooperatives, let alone the Labour Party, had an antiquated attitude to their public image. Lack of money was a threadbare alibi....The wealthy Cooperative movement squandered its money on having advertising pictures made by companies tainted by Conservative views....it was the Conservative mind that first caught on to the inspiration of the documentary idea. Labour had no ear for such an imaginative approach to public service and public education. Labour did not even have an aesthetic approach, let alone a social one. (124)

These charges are only partially accurate, failing to take into account the broader needs and priorities of the organisations for which Rotha in particular wished to make films. Labour generally was conceptually preoccupied with the printed and the direct spoken word. Papers, pamphlets, books, classes, public meetings, conferences and mass rallies were the principal channels of publicity for the Labour movement. With the development of talks on 'controversial' subjects radio broadcasting became increasingly important as a means for the mass communication of Labour views on current issues, and assumed increasing priority for the Party as a channel for publicity. Had radio not existed, film may have been regarded more favourably. But where radio was considered to be performing

122. B.Wright, The Long View op.cit., pp.109-10. See also J.Grierson's Preface to P.Rotha et al, Documentary Film op.cit., pp.16-17.

123. In a letter to The Times, 19 April 1966.

124. P.Rotha, Documentary Diary op.cit., pp.280-1.

a democratising function, film was regarded as a tainted medium. As Patrick Gordon Walker explained, Labour Party and trade union leaders had 'some doubts about the use of film as propaganda' because of 'the crudity of capitalist propaganda films' and because the medium was a principal tool of fascist dictatorships.(125) As has been shown in Chapter Three, the cinema industry was regarded with profound suspicion by Labour leaders. They regarded it as being implicated in a political conspiracy; giving support to Labour's political opponents. The industry's products were largely held in contempt, amid fears that the cinema, in exercising a vulgarising and stupefying influence, was undermining the democratic process. Since the foundations of Labour Socialism were a belief in the ultimate rationality of the individual and the inevitable evolution of society towards social democracy, Labour leaders were unlikely to view with approval anything which, in its effects, exercised a retrogressive influence. Given their developmental conception of an emerging social democracy, these leaders probably intuitively reacted against the idea of using film, and therefore approached the whole question of film propaganda and publicity with misgivings.

Indisposed to look favourably upon the cinema, Labour leaders appear, as Walker put it, to have 'not quite understood the use of the medium'.(126) They certainly lacked any aesthetic feel for film, and the range of suggestions made regarding possible productions for the movement, it would seem that, as Rotha has claimed, they lacked an imaginative approach. Some Labour leaders had an unsophisticated and very literal view. Walter Citrine for example, would appear to have had no film sense. In February 1933 he contacted the newsreel companies to obtain footage of their coverage of the National Demonstration on Unemployment which the National Joint Council had organised. His intention was to have an 'official record' of the event.(127) Such a request suggests that Citrine had no real understanding of the nature of film production - of the production values and organisational imperatives, and the conscious decisions and priorities, which are involved.

125. P.Gordon Walker, 'Politics and Film', The NFA Journal, July 1952, p.18.

126. Ibid.

127. TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 21 February 1933.

Apart from the nature of the medium, organisational factors also had some bearing on the response of the Labour Party and the TUC to the use of film. John Saville has argued that the style of activism characteristic of the early years of the Labour Party, based on the street-corner meeting, had, by the mid-1930's, long since past.(128) Street corner meetings had not disappeared, they were simply not the main form of political communication. As a national Party attempting to re-establish itself as a viable alternative Party of Office, the Party publicists appear to have been keen to move away from the image of a minority or sectional party conveyed by the street-corner meeting. The Party's appeal was national and aimed to attract middleclass as well as working class support. Party propaganda and campaign work was organised centrally, but depended very heavily on local initiative. The organisational style of the Party was to devolve responsibility largely with local and area organisations.(129) Between 1935 and 1938 the fundamental assumption of Citrine, Henderson, and other members of the Joint Film Committee was that responsibility for film exhibition and production rested almost wholly with local Labour Parties, Trades Councils, trade union branches, etc.(130) The Workers' Film Association was conceived in terms of providing a service for Labour organisations. It was not a department of the Party or the TUC. It was though intended to tailor its activities to the specific needs of these two bodies. But the balance of the relationship appears to have been such that the initiative for harnessing WFA activities to Labour Party/TUC requirements was rather more with the Association than with the National Joint Film Committee, its controlling body. Consequently, the two national organisations of the Labour movement which wielded the greatest political influence did virtually nothing to initiate film activity once they had established the Association in Wardour Street. The work of the WFA fitted in with established practice: it became, in effect, a film service for local Labour groups, (notwithstanding the electoral arrangements which were drawn up, which of course were never implemented): it was not part of

128. J.Saville, 'May Day 1937', in A.Briggs, J.Saville (eds.), Essays in Labour History 1918 - 1939 (London, 1977), p.273.

129. G.D.H.Cole, A Plan For Democratic Action (London, 1939), pp.34-5.

130. Election preparations apart, the only exception to this was the decision of the TUC's Organisation Committee to promote trade unionism by exhibiting films in cinemas. A total of £10 was allocated for the production of four thirty feet films, and £500 for their exhibition in cinemas. A pilot scheme was devised in the north of England and these loop films were shown in 80 cinemas for two months. Difficulties in arranging these exhibitions led to the abandonment of the scheme. TUC GC, Organisation Committee Minutes, 16 November 1937, 18 February 1938, 14 June 1938.

the Labour Party's political style to send daylight cinema vans across the country showing films to crowds gathered on street corners.

If it was the organisational practice of the Labour Party NEC and the TUC to devolve responsibility for propaganda work, then there was little point in funding a service if there was insufficient interest amongst local bodies in using the medium: scarce resources could be used more effectively in proven, and less expensive, methods of publicity. Until 1937 the Labour Film Committee was not entirely convinced that there was enough interest to justify the launching of such a scheme. Individual unions were largely indifferent. They gave priority to tried and tested methods of publicity, preferring to leave political work to the Party and the TUC.(131) Only two constituency Labour Parties appear to have been prepared to sponsor film production prior to 1937, Kensington Labour Party and Nottingham Labour Party, one film was concerned with infant mortality, North Kensington Nursery School, the other was a fictional propaganda film about the 'conversion to socialism'.(132) Even the Film Exhibition arranged at the Party's Annual Conference in 1936 was a failure, eliciting little response from delegates; and few local parties had the means to show films.

Other factors had some bearing on the decisions of the Film Committee. The scarcity of suitable projectors within the movement was of considerable importance in delaying the launching of the film service, as was the wrangle with the Cooperative Union and the Cooperative Wholesale Society over the financing of the scheme. The success of the NACEC's Film Department eventually convinced the Committee that there were sufficient means for showing films non-theatrically, and that sufficient interest existed to suggest that a film service was likely to have enough support to justify the funding involved. Even so, other problems interceded. The parlous state of the NEC's finances ensured that the Party leadership continued to view film propaganda as a desirable but largely impractical means of promoting the Party.

131. G.Elvin, in a letter to the author, 1 September 1977, confirmed this opinion. (After Reeves, Elvin was probably the most influential in securing the establishment of the WFA.) Before 1938 only two films were sponsored by trade unions: Construction (see above, p.335) and The Union of Post Office Workers, which was made in 1927. For details of this film see Kinematograph Weekly, 17 February 1927, p.35. A copy survives in the National Film Archive.
132. See Kino News n.d., May 1936; Left Review, May 1936, p.415; Labour Organiser, December 1934, p.219.

The Labour Party's National Executive had to raise a loan in early 1938 to meet the daily expenses of the Office, incurring a deficit on the year's account of over £6000. In 1939 the situation had deteriorated further, and another loan had to be negotiated. This over-spending was due in large part to 'the practice of running special campaigns' and 'the growing demands made by the Movement on Headquarters'.(133) The Party was clearly in some difficulty, but only because, as W.W.Henderson, Head of the Publicity Department, put it in 1936,

Phases of effort which hitherto have generally been regarded as 'special efforts' must now be regarded as part of the normal activities of the Party. (134)

The Party was on a semi-permanent election footing during the 1938-9 period, regularly drawing up plans, launching massive campaign drives, for an election which never came. Demands on resources were considerable and priority was given to traditional methods of publicity - methods which were proven to be reliable, and suited the style of the Party and its mode of operation. Leaflets, posters, etc., were as equally rapidly obsolete as film in the Party's electorally-determined view. But whereas leaflets, or the Daily Herald, could be produced overnight and issued to millions within a few days, film publicity required months of planning and production, with no guarantee that anyone would see it, or that it would be topical.

It was the poor financial position of the TUC which led to the deferment of the implementation of Citrine's scheme in 1935; and it is important to note that it was envisaged that the central offices of the TUC would run the film service had they been able to afford to launch the project. But here again, it was a question of priorities. The following year, its financial position not markedly improved, the Council agreed to provide £2000 to finance a ten-week tour of Britain by a professional theatre troupe, which was to perform a play on the Tolpuddle Martyrs, 'Six Men of Dorset'.(135)

133. LPNEC, National Executive Committee, 'The Financial Position of the Party', March 1939.
134. Ibid., Press and Publicity Department, 'Labour Party Literature Campaign', 20 May 1936.
135. TUC GC, Organisation Committee, 'The Theatre and Trade Union Propaganda', 16 October 1936. The tour was not a success, with net losses of over £1800.

Most individual trade unions, largely uninterested in film publicity, could not be considered wealthy in the sense of having access to relatively large sums of disposable money. But for the larger unions the situation was quite different. The Amalgamated Engineering Union, the National Union of Railwaymen and the National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers could each provide £500 to finance the Party's 'Victory for Socialism' campaign in 1934, with total trade union contributions amounting to over £3000 before the campaign commenced.(136) In 1937 the Transport and General Workers' Union and the National Union of General and Municipal Workers gave £1000 and £650 respectively to fund the London Labour Party's LCC election campaign, organised by Herbert Morrison.(137) In the 1938-9 financial year the following unions donated considerable sums to the TUC's International Solidarity Fund and the Labour Party's Spain Fund: National Union of Railwaymen (£1000), National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers (£2750/£500), Miners' Federation of Great Britain (£5000/£30,000), and the Transport and General Workers' Union (£2000). The Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers paid £1000 to the NCLC to sponsor education work; the TGWU loaned the Workers' Travel Association £25,000; and NUDAW gave the Labour Party £1000 simply to help its finances and pay routine expenses.(138)

136. LPNEC, National Executive Committee, "'Victory for Socialism" Campaign. Financial Statement', 22 March 1934; 'General Fund. Financial Statement', 2 May 1934.
137. B.Donoghue, G.W.Jones, Herbert Morrison op.cit., p.210; National Union of General and Municipal Workers, Report of the Biennial Congress 1938, p.41.
138. TUC Library, National Union of Railwaymen, Proceedings and Reports, 1938, p.21; National Union of Distributive and Allied Workers, Annual Report 1939, p.26; 1940, p.11; Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers, Annual Report 1938, p.26; National Union of Mineworkers Library, Miners' Federation of Great Britain, Annual Volume of Proceedings 1938-9, Minutes of the Executive Committee, 11 August 1938, 16 February 1939; Transport and General Workers' Union Archive, TGWU, Minutes of the General Executive Council and Finance and General Purposes Committee, 12 August 1938, 27 October 1938.

There was clearly a considerable amount of money available from one source or another, yet those with the most readily disposable funds were the least interested in investing it in film publicity. Had prominent individuals within the Party shown more enthusiasm for the medium the Party as a whole may have been more receptive to the suggestions of Calder and Rotha, but this is unlikely. Unfortunately the private papers of these people, where they exist, reveal nothing of their attitude towards film publicity. There is no indication in Attlee's papers, for example, that the Leader of the Party was in any way attracted to the medium, either for his own projection or that of the Party.(139) Herbert Morrison, considered by many contemporaries to be the Party's leading publicist, and very keen to use the most modern techniques of publicity, displayed, according to Rotha, little interest in film.(140) Sir Stafford Cripps, the only senior Labour politician after the war to argue the need for utilising the film as part of the public relations work of the Labour Government, was the only one before the war responsive to the appeal of the documentarists. He apparently gave much encouragement to Rotha and other documentary film-makers, and raised funds for the production of the film Peace of Britain.(141) The papers of those involved in the work of the Film Committee either no longer survive, as in the case of Joseph Reeves, Lord Ritchie Calder and W.W.Henderson, or contain nothing of relevance, as in the case of Lord Citrine, J.S.Middleton and George Elvin.

Contemporary evidence already cited, and opinions expressed in letters to the author by George Elvin, Sir Vincent Tewson, Lord Ritchie Calder, and interviews with Ralph Bond and Paul Rotha suggest that it was the enthusiasm of Elvin, Rotha, Calder and Reeves which succeeded in persuading the Party and TUC leaders to invest in a film service for the movement. But for their persistence it is probable that despite a good deal of theoretical interest within those leaderships nothing would have actually been achieved.

139. For Attlee's views on the press, and public relations generally, see J.Margach, The Abuse of Power (London, 1979), pp.86-91.
140. B.Donoghue, G.W.Jones, Herbert Morrison op.cit., pp.207-18; P.Rotha, in an interview with the author. Lord Morrison's papers have not survived.
141. See B.Wright, interview, in E.Orbanz, Journey to a Legend and Back op.cit., p.139; P.Rotha, interview, in E.Sussex, The Rise and Fall of British Documentary op.cit., p.161; P.Rotha, Documentary Diary op.cit., pp.164-5. Sir Stafford Cripps' papers are unrewarding on this subject.

There were other reasons for this apparent lack of interest. Apart from one or two individuals on the periphery of the documentary movement, documentary film-makers were anxious to avoid being aligned officially with any political party. This was not merely to avoid difficulties regarding future industrial or government sponsorship, but also to avoid being obliged to produce material tailored specifically to the particular line of a party. Being creative individuals they wished to retain their independence. This may have been an inhibiting factor in negotiations between documentarists and the Labour Party's Publicity Department. For example, while Paul Rotha and Donald Taylor, of Strand Films, wrote a scenario for a film intended to contribute to the Party's 'Agricultural Campaign' in 1937-8 they were not prepared to edit it to Party requirements, and the project was abandoned⁽¹⁴²⁾ Unable ultimately to control the content of any film which it may have sponsored, the Publicity Department was perhaps reluctant to commission either Strand Films or the Realist Film Unit to produce documentary publicity material. Such doubts as there may have been were perhaps justified from the Party's point of view bearing in mind the case of Realist Film Unit's Advance Democracy which, commissioned by the four London Cooperative Societies, advocated a political strategy firmly rejected by both its sponsors and the Party. An additional effect of this problem may have been to lead the Party's publicists towards the view that trade unions were more appropriate for the sponsorship of documentary films: only films about unions, their benefits to the community and the work of their members, could avoid or minimise problems of editorial control - leaving documentarists with more freedom to manoeuvre as independent creative publicists.

The Party and the TUC failed to learn from the success of the Party-directed work of the Conservative and Unionist Films Association, and persisted in the tactical error of allowing Labour film activities to remain uncoordinated with Party/TUC campaign and propaganda work (despite plans being drawn up, nothing was actually done). Had Labour Party film units toured the country with a repertoire of material for

142. P.Rotha, in an interview with the author, 25 January 1978. Pressure appears to have been put on documentary film-makers by 'unofficial censorship' to confine their work to subjects with less political topicality. Given their vulnerability to the withdrawal of government or industrial sponsorship documentarists may therefore have been doubly reluctant to make films putting the Labour Party point of view in an overt propagandistic manner. See J.Grierson 'Battle for Authenticity', World Film News, November 1938, p.305; G.Elvin, 'This Freedom - An Inquiry into Film Censorship', The Cine Technician, January-February 1939, p.145.

social, cultural and political meetings, produced specifically for Party purposes and integrated with the normal activities of local Parties, in conjunction with national campaigns, then audiences, interest and support for the Workers' Film Association may have been considerably greater. But this presupposes a close coordination of activities between Head Office and local organisations which did not generally exist.

The Labour Party and the TUC were curiously ambivalent about using film. They wanted to do so, and were aware of the need to do so for political reasons. Yet ultimately their interest was not sufficient to warrant a high priority being placed on using the medium. Indeed, one of the most conspicuous aspects of Labour's response to film was on the one hand the willingness of trade unions and local Party organisations to leave responsibility almost entirely with the two national leaderships; and on the other, the assumptions of these leaderships that firstly, in providing the initial funds to launch the film service they had discharged their responsibilities, and secondly, that it was the duty of unions and constituency parties to sponsor the production and arrange the exhibition of films provided by this service. Unlike the Conservative Party, the Labour Party was unwilling to coordinate film exhibition with the routine publicity work of its Party Agents, and made no attempt to organise national or regional tours with mobile cinema units. Consequently the Workers' Film Association failed to conduct its operations on a scale remotely comparable with that of the Conservative Party and the National Government which, according to one estimate, exhibited their films to an audience of over one-and-a-half million people in 1935, (143) making the work of the WFA appear woefully inadequate and amateur.

But to draw upon the comments of the documentary film-makers, who had an interest in securing Party sponsorship and therefore were not entirely impartial, and to use the comparison of the Conservative Party, casts the film work of the Labour Party and the TUC in completely negative terms, of thoroughgoing failure. What these two organisations did was not very much; and there were, as suggested above, several reasons why this was so. But there was perhaps an equally compelling

143. World Film News, December 1936, p. 9.

reason which had little to do with film. The fundamental change in the relationship between politicians and voters which had taken place since the end of the Great War had altered the conception of the political process which informed the strategies of Labour politicians. In the age of the mass electorate the use of film for cadre work was far less important than mass propaganda. Labour leaders recognised that ultimately, the cinema was, for good or ill, not open as a channel of communication to the masses for the Labour movement - whereas radio was. At best film could perform a cadre function, but the circumstances obtaining in the late 1930's, of limited projection facilities, financial constraints, lack of suitable films, etc., would ensure that such a role was never very satisfactory. It was to newspapers and radio that hopes of Labour's resurrection were pinned, and given the enormous power of radio, its broad democratising function, and the fact that the technology was already there, the focus of interest amongst Labour Party politicians was Broadcasting House, not the WFA offices in Wardour Street. This perspective has been well summarised by G.D.H.Cole:

the tremendous enlargement of the electorate has made both the conditions of political propaganda and the relations between the voter and representative utterly unlike what they used to be. Political meetings can reach today only a small fraction of those who have the right to vote. Canvassing is very difficult among so many: the newspaper and the wireless talk become the only effective means of appealing to the less politically conscious electors; and they are open very little to the general run of candidates. Consequently, though elections remain local in form, the basis of electoral appeals becomes increasingly national, and the individual candidate counts for a good deal less than he did. (144)

Chapter Ten: POLITICAL BROADCASTING: LABOUR'S ATTEMPTS TO GAIN ACCESS TO RADIO

Radio broadcasting offered to the Labour Party the tantalising prospect of a medium of mass communication under public control and imbued with an ethos of public service. Where the cinema was very much the medium of the masses, the radio appeared as the medium for the masses - one which would enrich and inform the lives of ordinary people, and encourage participation in the civic culture, rather than serve to stupefy thought and inhibit political involvement in the democratic process. The BBC's democratising potential was fully appreciated, and despite strong criticism of certain aspects of BBC policy, Labour leaders never lost sight of the fundamentally positive contribution which the Corporation was making to the social, cultural and political development of the population. But, by definition, this process of democratic development, in the view of such leaders, involved the further growth of the Labour Party and the wider acceptance of Labour Socialism, the Party's ideology. MacDonald and his colleagues had, by 1928-29, begun to see in the BBC the means by which they could counter the machinations of their political opponents, and in particular neutralise and eventually overcome the handicap of near-universal press hostility. If one of Labour's difficulties in the age of mass communication was reaching the masses, then the BBC offered an immensely powerful medium for the exposition of Labour policies and views, and the political education of the electorate. The problem however was one of access to the technology; and, once access had been gained, equality of access with Labour's political opponents.

This Chapter examines the attempts by the Labour Party to gain equality of access to radio broadcasting for political purposes. As suggested in Chapter Four, the vast bulk of surviving evidence connected with attempts by Labour organisations to use the medium relate to the Labour Party. Other Labour organisations did of course gain access to the airwaves, principally the Trades Union Congress General Council. But their contribution to the broadcasting of the period was almost wholly of a broad educational character. Some Labour personalities appeared quite regularly before the microphone; but they did so largely as individuals recruited for their expertise on particular subjects, and not as representatives of the organisations to which they belonged.

Moreover, while there is an abundance of source material concerning the planning and execution of particular programmes or series to which they contributed, there is insufficient surviving material to provide an overall view of the development of general political broadcasting involving such individuals, from the point of view of Labour's attempts to use the medium for political purposes. Consequently the focus of this Chapter is the Labour Party, and the surviving sources concentrate almost exclusively on the question of party political broadcasting rather than general broadcast talks in connection with subjects of a political nature. Again, the Archive of the BBC has been the principal source of documentation. Its files are by no means complete, with sets of correspondence missing for the Labour Party for the period 1933 - 1937, and a paucity of material on particular negotiations in 1935 and 1938-9. But there is a mass of material available, in contrast to the unrewarding administrative records of Labour organisations.

1.

The original Licence granted by the Postmaster General to the BBC in January 1923 contained no reference to 'controversial broadcasting'. It simply required the Company to transmit 'a programme of broadcast matter to the reasonable satisfaction of the Postmaster General'. (1) The intention of the monopoly granted to the Company was to pre-empt any problems which might arise, if there was more than one broadcasting agency, regarding the allocation of wavelengths, financial arrangements and the issue of licences to listeners. The approach of the Post Office to the BBC was essentially one of civil service administration. As the Licence granted was to last for a period of two years, the performance of the Company as a monopoly was under close scrutiny; and Post Office dissatisfaction with programme policy could have led to its withdrawal. In so far as the Company was run for commercial purposes, to promote the sale of receiving sets, the public response to broadcast programmes could have had a critical effect on the life of the Company. In consequence Reith specifically ruled out the broadcasting of controversial matters: 'we avoided them of our own volition from the start'. (2) The

1. Cmd. 1822 (1923) Wireless Broadcasting Licence.
2. BBC, Broadcasting Advisory Board Minutes, Reith to F.W. Phillips, 20 May 1924.

dispute in the House of Commons which broke out in early 1923 over the Company's monopoly led directly to an official inquiry to look (among other matters) at the future organisation of the BBC in relation to the question of monopoly control. During the inquiry Reith insisted that, regarding the possibility of broadcasting 'anything controversial', the BBC would 'obviously not do it'. (3) Such reassurances appear to have failed to impress the Sykes Committee. Although it accepted the continuation of the monopoly it also recommended tighter Government regulation. A Supplementary Agreement to the Licence was duly introduced, by Clause 8 of which the PMG reserved the right to issue Licences to other broadcasting organisations should the BBC not provide a satisfactory service. (4) As the Licence was to be extended to 31 December 1926 the Company's trial period had also in effect been extended.

Reith was highly conscious therefore of the need to avoid pursuing a programme policy which would incur the wrath either of the listeners or the Postmaster General, an extraordinarily difficult task. The pitfalls soon became apparent on the day the Sykes Committee was appointed. On 24 April 1923 the PMG stated that

I think it is undesirable that the broadcasting service should be used for the dissemination of speeches on controversial matters, and I have had the attention of the British Broadcasting Company called to the incident... (5)

The incident to which Joynson-Hicks referred was a broadcast speech by B.S.Tounroe, editor of The Building News and a former Conservative candidate. Tounroe had offered to make a broadcast following the threat of a building workers' strike. In what, in retrospect, appears to be an error of judgment on Reith's part, Tounroe's request was granted, and his talk on the 12 April contained an appeal to both sides of the dispute to accept arbitration and avoid a strike. The general tone of his argument however was to place the responsibility for ending the dispute with the workers; and he warned of the consequences should they

3. BBC, Sykes Committee Minutes, second meeting.
4. Cmd. 1976 (1923) Supplementary Agreement [to] the Licence.
5. Hansard, vol.163, cols. 300-1, 24 April 1923.

decide to take strike action. (6) The Labour Whip, C.G. Ammon, protested, and the controversy which the talk aroused in the House of Commons precipitated Joynson-Hicks' statement. As Reith revealed in his evidence to the Sykes Committee, he interpreted the 'influence' which the PMG exercised over the BBC as effectively an 'instruction'. (7)

The PMG's statement obliged Reith to take a more careful line over matters of controversy, and, it would appear, question his own assumptions about what was legitimate and what was likely to provoke criticism. Thereafter the Company developed the practice of asking the Post Office for permission and advice regarding anything which could be considered controversial; and a Broadcasting Advisory Board was established to advise on such matters. Within a year the Board could report the Company had been 'very successful' in avoiding controversy. (8)

By this time Reith had clarified his view of controversial broadcasting, and tried on several occasions to secure permission for the transmission of political speeches by the three main parties. Similarly, he had unsuccessfully attempted to persuade the PMG to approve party political speeches being broadcast in connection with the General Election in December 1923. (9) The Sykes Report had recommended that some latitude be given in respect of 'controversy', but it was only under the first Labour Government that such latitude was granted. In June 1924 the Broadcasting Advisory Board advised against too strict a policy, and suggested that while political speeches should be avoided, some discussion of subjects which were otherwise controversial should be allowed. (10) This was accepted by Vernon Hartshorn, the PMG, as the most sensible way forward. (11) Ignoring this, Reith suggested a debate between the Leaders of the three Parties on some subject of current political interest. Hartshorn replied in August:

6. The draft of Tounroe's talk survives. See BBC, Policy. Strikes.
7. BBC, Sykes Committee Minutes, second meeting.
8. Ibid., Broadcasting Advisory Board Minutes, 14 May 1924.
9. Ibid., Policy. Political Broadcasting. General Elections., F.W. Phillips to Reith, 17 November 1923. (Hereafter, this file will be referred to as 'P.GE.')
10. Ibid., Broadcasting Advisory Board Minutes, 18 June 1924.
11. Ibid., 8 July 1924.

if one such debate were allowed, it would no doubt lead to proposals for others of a similar character and.... it would be extremely difficult to draw the line between what should and should not be permitted.

As the Company no doubt realise, a considerable section of the public would probably strongly protest against doctrines, which are repugnant to them, being issued broadcast by an agency, controlled by the Government in power, even though the other side of the arguments were presented at the same time in the form of a debate. Such protest might even take the form of deliberate oscillation, as recent experience in similar circumstances has proved in America. (12)

Hartshorn considered that he would have to consult the Cabinet before agreeing to such a proposal. By this time the position of the minority Labour administration was becoming tenuous, as political opinion within the House was highly critical of the treaties recently signed with the Soviet Union. Preoccupied with this deteriorating situation Hartshorn considered it inadvisable, given the uncertain political future of the Government, to allow a debate on some current issue of political controversy. On 8 October the fate of the Government was decided, and the following day MacDonald asked the King for a dissolution of Parliament. The same day Reith asked the PMG for permission to broadcast a speech by the three Party Leaders before the Election; and after consultation with the Prime Minister Hartshorn agreed two days later. (13) Between the 13 - 17 October 1924 the first uncensored political broadcasts in Britain took place, the direct result of Reith's persistence and powers of persuasion. But due also to the foresight of Labour leaders, who were under no obligation to grant such permission. Perhaps they saw some possible advantage in doing so, as an outgoing Government. Certainly, as Chris Cook has shown, the Labour Party faced the Election in a stronger position than in any previous campaign. (14) The reasons for the decision are unclear in the absence of sufficient evidence. Nevertheless, not only were Labour leaders the first Party leaders to accept political broadcasting as a legitimate part of electioneering, but they set a precedent, following which it proved difficult for subsequent Conservative PMGs to resist further encroachments of broadcasting into the arena of politics.

12. BBC, Policy. Political Broadcasting. General., W.E.Euston (for Hartshorn) to Reith, 19 August 1924. (Hereafter, 'P.G.')
13. Ibid., P.G.E., Correspondence between Hartshorn and Reith, October 1924.
14. C.Cook, The Age of Alignment (London, 1975), pp.279-82.

As for the Election broadcast of MacDonald, given on 13 October, it was a disaster. MacDonald was, as Marquand put it, 'Labour's chief answer' to the Conservative campaign, which focussed on the Campbell case and the Russian Treaties. (15) The Labour Party based its campaign partly on MacDonald's achievements in office, which were meagre, but mainly on the reputation, sincerity and popularity of their Leader, whose charismatic appeal was given great weight in the Election. MacDonald's standing has been well described by Egon Wertheimer, his contemporary and friend:

In the imagination and consciousness of thousands his position is beyond party politics.....he has become a legendary being - the personification of all that thousands of downtrodden men and women dream and desire.....he is the focus of the mute hopes of a whole class. (16)

Wertheimer, who produced an incisive examination of the Labour Party, was not given to blind eulogy, and while this assessment of MacDonald needs qualifying it nevertheless captures the essence of the Labour Leader's support within the ranks of the Party faithful. With this in view, MacDonald's opportunity to reach millions of people simultaneously probably appeared particularly attractive, although it is likely that the majority of people who were able to listen were not the people to whom Wertheimer referred. Even so, MacDonald's broadcast speech in Glasgow had been preceded by a lengthy journey from London that day, during which he gave three long addresses. His evening speech, the main one of the day, drove his live audience, according to one observer, M.A.Hamilton, to a 'white heat' of excitement. But he was tired, his voice was faltering, and he moved restlessly about the platform. (17)

MacDonald was accustomed to speaking before large public meetings, and ignored Reith's advice to broadcast from a studio. (18) His platform oratory, received as a disembodied voice, appeared to listeners as 'irresponsible ranting'. (19) Whereas Baldwin, who took the trouble to

15. D.Marquand, Ramsay MacDonald (London, 1977), p.378.
16. E.Wertheimer, Portrait of the Labour Party 2nd. ed. (London, 1930), pp. 176-7.
17. M.A.Hamilton, ('Iconoclast'), J.Ramsay MacDonald (1923-1925) (London, n.d., 1925), p.123.
18. J.C.W.Reith, Into the Wind (London, 1949), p.96.
19. A.J.Salter, Personality in Politics (London, 1947), p.58.

visit Savoy Hill, clearly benefitted from Reith's advice and gave a studio speech which was calm and persuasive.

With the return of the Conservatives to power came the return of the veto on controversial broadcasting, and the matter was left in abeyance pending the outcome of the Crawford Committee's inquiry into the future organisation and structure of broadcasting. (20) The Crawford Report recommended 'a moderate amount of controversial matter' in the programmes of the BBC, provided that the material 'is of high quality and distributed with scrupulous fairness'. (21) Following the General Strike the recommendations of the Report were implemented, and the new Charter and Licence gave the PMG specific powers to prohibit any matter from being broadcast. Within eleven days of the British Broadcasting Corporation coming into being Sir William Mitchell-Thomson, the Postmaster General, indicated that the Licence required the Corporation to refrain from broadcasting statements expressing the opinions of the Corporation on matters of public policy, and 'speeches or lectures containing statements on topics of political, religious or industrial controversy'. (22)

For the first time the position of the BBC concerning political broadcasting had been clearly defined. Persistent lobbying by Reith, with the backing of the newly established Board of Governors, eventually persuaded the PMG to reverse his decision, and the ban on controversial matter was lifted on 5 March 1928. The decision was based on the satisfactory way in which the BBC had conformed to the restrictions imposed. But the discretionary powers entrusted to the Corporation were experimental and the Government retained the right to reverse the decision in the light of further experience. Responsibility for ensuring that the Corporation interpreted this new freedom strictly in the spirit of the recommendations of the Crawford Report lay with the Board of Governors. (23) Not surprisingly therefore, the era in broadcasting which this decision inaugurated did not start with a sudden explosion of controversial talks and debates. The Board of Governors quickly agreed that there should be a gradual and

20. BBC, P.G., Mitchell-Thomson to Reith, 28 May 1925.

21. Cmd. 2599 (1926) Report of the Broadcasting Committee, p.15.

22. BBC, P.G., Mitchell-Thomson to Reith, 11 January 1927.

23. Ibid., Mitchell-Thomson to Reith, 5 March 1928.

experimental introduction of political and economic controversy, focussing on clearly defined occasions, such as pieces of legislation presented to Parliament. There was to be no insertion of controversial talks into existing series of talks, no single talk on a controversial matter, and no inclusion of talks in the Programme just because they were controversial.(24) As Roger Eckersley, the Assistant Controller (Programmes) put it:

We want to aim in time at being able to introduce controversial matter as a normal thing: in other words, it should be less treated as an event than as normal programme practice. (25)

To ensure that this happened, a Controversy Committee, consisting of departmental heads and Control staff, was established in March 1928.

2.

By the time the ban on controversy had been lifted the Corporation's Talks Department had almost exhausted the supply of non-controversial subjects from which it was possible to generate debate of a level consistent with the high standards to which the Department aspired. More seriously, it had exhausted the supply of high calibre speakers who were willing to take part in such talks. (26) Following the PMG's announcement in March however there was little hesitation amongst Labour leaders. Arthur Henderson almost immediately requested broadcasting facilities for Ramsay MacDonald, who was to make a major political speech on 2 April in connection with the forthcoming general election, the first such request from the main political Parties. (27) Made at too short notice for programming and inclusion in the Radio Times, the request could not be granted. Nor could it have been given without prior consultation with the other main Parties and a series of talks arranged. Nevertheless, the incident, together with encouragement from the Liberals and Conservatives, led Eckersley to draw up a

24. BBC, Board of Governors Minutes, 14 March 1928.

25. Ibid., Talks. Debates and Discussions., R.Eckersley to Reith, 21 September 1928.

26. Ibid., H.Matheson to R.Eckersley, 21 February 1928.

27. Ibid., Policy. Political Broadcasting. Party Political Broadcasting., A.Henderson to Reith, 13 March 1928. (Hereafter, 'P.PPB.')

plan for political broadcasting, again the first of its kind, based on two fundamental principles. Firstly, as Reith was obliged to explain to Albert Inkpin of the Communist Party of Great Britain, who had also requested broadcasting facilities,

Arrangements are now being considered for broadcasts of a politically controversial nature with the three political parties who represent at the present time the three chief groups into which the House of Commons is divided, and which may be assumed to reflect the opinion of the large majority of the electorate. (28)

The regular broadcasting of politically controversial talks was envisaged primarily in terms of party political broadcasting based on party lines and party definitions of issues (even though the BBC eventually took some part in the selection of these issues). Other forms of political broadcasting were vaguely defined by current practice: the enunciation of the Budget, speeches at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, and Departmental talks explaining official Government policy. But these had not been long established, were not precisely categorised, and were regarded, at least by the Corporation, as essentially 'non-controversial'. The central focus of political broadcasting was not 'politics' or issues of current controversy, but the political process as defined by Reith, his senior colleagues and the Board of Governors: the party system in the House of Commons.

The second fundamental principle was that of complete equality in the allocation of opportunity and time to each Party. (29) Before this could be discussed by Party Leaders however Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, appears to have persuaded Reith that there should be no absolute equality between the Government of the day and Opposition Parties; rather it should have the right of reply to each. (30) The experimental scheme to which Reith subsequently invited Party Leaders to agree was based on this modified principle, and presented in terms of the 'scope of privileges to which they will be entitled'. (31) The style of approach anticipated the central problem which was to arise. Party Leaders wrangled with each other of course, but they also took

28. BBC, P.PPB., Reith to Inkpin, 10 May 1928.

29. Ibid., R.Eckersley to Reith, 4 April 1928.

30. Ibid., Reith to Lord Clarendon, 13 April 1928.

31. Ibid., Reith to Henderson, 19 April 1928.

issue with the BBC, the Labour Party in particular taking the view that the Corporation should merely provide the technical and programming facilities: it was the responsibility of the Parties to decide upon how those facilities should be used. But this was to materialise later. For the present the scheme which Reith outlined provided the first attempt to define political broadcasting for practical application.

In the first instance each main Party would have at its disposal half an hour (one broadcast per week) for the enunciation of Party policy in general. After three weeks, succeeding speeches would take place every fortnight while Parliament was in session, and would continue until dissolution, expected at the latest in June 1929. The rota was to take the form of one Government spokesman to each Opposition spokesman, using the formula AB, AC where B represented the Labour Party and C the Liberals. With the dissolution of Parliament the former procedure of absolute equality of opportunity (ABC) would be adopted. Reith intended to continue the broadcasting of Government speeches at the Lord Mayor's Banquet, on the Budget, and non-controversial statements explaining Government policy or legislation passing through Parliament. Such speeches were not regarded as controversial occasions requiring Opposition speeches in reply. (32)

While J.C.C. Davidson for the Conservative Party accepted this scheme in its entirety, Samuel for the Liberals took strong objection to many points and proposed a joint conference of the Parties and the Corporation to resolve them. Henderson approved of the scheme in principle, but also proposed a conference to refine certain details. (33) The record of that conference, held on 21 May 1928, conveys something of the intensity of political feeling between the three Parties. While agreement was reached on the preliminary three talks enunciating general policy, Samuel objected to the BBC's definition of set-piece, non-partisan, Government speeches as 'non-controversial', and, regarding the scheme of regular broadcasts, rejected the Government's claim of right of reply to each Opposition Party. Henderson, though agreeing in principle to the scheme, would not commit himself to the exact proposals made. He was prepared to accept that the Government of the day should have 'some preponderance of opportunity over either Opposition Party', but this

32. BBC, P.PPB., Reith to Henderson, 19 April 1928.

33. Ibid., Henderson to Reith, 4 May 1928.

advantage should not be equal to the total number of broadcasts for both. (34) Samuel concurred in this view, and proposed a new formula in the ratio 7A 5B 5C. Henderson agreed, but Davidson refused to consider any modification of the original scheme; at which point Henderson took the view that Davidson's intransigence had created a new situation: if the Government was not prepared to negotiate he (Henderson) could not now accept the original scheme. Deadlock ensued, forcing Reith to reconsider the whole idea of political broadcasting.

Lindsay, the Labour Party Secretary, subsequently explained the Party's position: it had agreed to the BBC's proposals in principle in order 'to obtain accommodation' - to ensure that party political broadcasting became a reality, and that the Labour Party participated. It had agreed to the principle of the Government of the day having the right of reply to each Opposition Party on the assumption that these broadcasts would consist, on the one hand, in criticism of Government policy, and, on the other, defence of that policy.

It is realised now, however, that if the scheme is to be carried out successfully and without bringing broadcasting generally into disrepute, the speeches must only be of an expository and constructive character, and not of the nature of attack and reply in the narrow party sense; that they should, in fact, be of an educational character in the wide popular view. (35)

Accordingly, the Party took the view that there should be a strictly equal allocation of time and opportunity to each of the three main Parties. Lindsay's letter reveals an astute appeal to Reith's broadcasting values of impartiality and high moral purpose. How far the change of view within the Party leadership was merely a tactical manoeuvre rather than a quite different conception of party political broadcasting is difficult to judge. Certainly it was consistent with later statements on the value of political broadcasting; and the failure of the partisan oratory of MacDonald in the disastrous election of 1924 was unlikely to have been forgotten. But it would appear that, from

34. BBC, P.PPB., Minutes of the Political Broadcasting Conference, 21 May 1928.
35. Ibid., Lindsay to Reith, 24 May 1928.

what slim evidence there is, that the change of attitude to Reith's scheme, explained by Lindsay, was both: a tactical move in response to Davidson's aggressive, uncompromising stance, and an accurate reflection of what the Party believed political broadcasting should become. The persistent theme throughout Labour commentary in the inter-war period was the problem of persuading a largely mis-informed electorate of the 'facts'. If party political broadcasting was to consist in a mere exchange of partisan jibes, vitriolic criticism, and the rhetoric and complex manoeuvring of the debates in the House of Commons, then this electorate would remain confused, and the specific advantage which Labour could gain from using the medium would be lost - or rather, the specific disadvantage of having little press support could not be neutralised.

Lindsay's appeal to Reith however overlooked a vital factor in the situation. The Party assumed that the BBC had a completely free hand, which was not the case. The whole question of political broadcasting had been placed in doubt by June 1928, as Davidson refused to accept anything but the original BBC scheme. The larger issue was made very clear to the Director General by Davidson, as Reith revealed to Clarendon, the Chairman of the Board of Governors:

He has, of course, also privately confirmed what I knew before, and what you heard yesterday, namely that, if we do not maintain our original proposals, the Government would withdraw the controversial liberty. The alternative, of course, is the abandoning of the idea of political speeches altogether, at any rate until the General Election. (36)

Meanwhile, the Board of Governors had decided that even if agreement on regular party political talks was not possible, the initial three party broadcasts, unanimously agreed, should go ahead. (37) However, Reith subsequently had to write to the three Parties that in view of their inability to reach agreement with respect to the rota of political speeches, the Governors had reluctantly concluded that 'for the present' no political speeches of this type could be made. (38) This act of

36. BBC, P.PPB., Reith to Clarendon, 8 June 1928.

37. Ibid., Control Board Minutes, 5 June 1928.

38. Ibid., P.PPB., Reith to Henderson, 28 June 1928.

denial was probably also an act of self-preservation, the putative powers of the PMG being sufficient, given Davidson's intimation that the veto on controversy could be restored, to induce Reith and the Governors to shelve the project for the time-being.

Whatever the private source of this retreat, the ostensible reason was the inability of the Parties to reach agreement, an explanation which was initially accepted by the Labour Party. By December 1928 the Liberals were complaining that the BBC was complicit in a Government policy of suppressing the legitimate use of broadcasting by the political parties. (39) Gladstone Murray, Assistant Controller (Information) sought Davidson's help to try and head off the likely storm of criticism. Davidson gave little encouragement, taking the view that the benefits which would accrue from the regular broadcasting of politics would be outweighed by the detriment to the public interest which would arise from the loss of a good broadcasting tradition, that by which the Corporation remained outside the arena of party political controversy. He did not indicate any strong objection to the question being resurrected, but insisted that if it was, then the formula must be AB AC, or AB, or nothing. (40) Implicitly this was a sign that the Corporation could try again, and immediately Carpendale wrote to the Party Leaders, offering air-time for the broadcasting of political speeches provided that they could agree on a scheme. (41) By this time Director of Talks Hilda Matheson had clarified her ideas on the whole question of political broadcasting, and put forward various strategies to circumvent any future inter-party deadlock. (42) Moreover, the General Election was by now little more than six months distant, and if, regardless of any series of regular political talks, special political broadcasts were to be arranged in connection with the Election, then plans had to be drawn up well in advance. As Matheson revealed, there was a general feeling within the Corporation at least, that to broadcast merely one talk each by the three Party Leaders, as in 1924, would be 'very inadequate'. She proposed that two talks each should be offered, the advantage additionally being that by doing the same thing twice over (ABC, ABC)

39. BBC, P.PPB., Murray to Davidson, 18 December 1928.

40. Ibid., Murray to Carpendale, 21 December 1928. (Sir Charles Carpendale was Controller (Programmes).)

41. Ibid., P.GE., Carpendale to Samuel, 22 December 1928.

42. Ibid., Matheson to R.Eckersley, 20 December 1928.

this would not involve the Corporation in any argument about a rota. (43)

Carpendale's offer of regular party political talks elicited a new proposal from the Labour Party. In his reply Henderson revealed the lack of precision in the Party's grasp of the concept of political broadcasting, considering political talks and debates as more or less the same thing - an error of understanding for which Labour leaders could be forgiven, since the BBC itself had not clarified its own working definitions until December 1928, and the process was not fully complete until October the following year. (44) Dismissing 'time-consuming' debates in which speakers of opposing views followed each other, he proposed a new scheme in which an hourly slot in the programme every fortnight would be available for political broadcasting: 'each party in turn [would] have the right to occupy this time as it thinks fit'. (45) As for the approaching Election, Henderson suggested that these hourly slots could be made available weekly.

Reith took these proposals seriously enough to warrant meeting MacDonald to discuss them; and the Liberals gave their support. But the Conservatives were unimpressed, and the Corporation reverted to its original position of basing political broadcasting in the forthcoming elections on the previous one, with the possibility of offering two broadcasts to each Party rather than one. As no agreement on regular party political talks had emerged, these were in effect written off by the Director General - prompting MacDonald to demand a meeting with Reith and Clarendon. The record of their conversation is highly illuminating. MacDonald accused the Corporation of having denied the Labour Party facilities to put across its point of view; and insisted that the breakdown in negotiations was not Labour's responsibility since 'he was willing to agree to practically anything'. (46) MacDonald believed that

they were the Party that had most to gain by the microphone in that they possessed only one small newspaper...(47)

43. BBC, P.G.E., Matheson to R.Eckersley, 7 February 1929.
44. Ibid., Matheson to R.Eckersley, 20 December 1928; ibid., P.G., Reith to Lees-Smith, 30 October 1929.
45. Ibid., P.G.E., Henderson to Reith, 8 February 1929.
46. Ibid., Record of an interview between Lord Clarendon, Ramsay MacDonald and Sir John Reith, 26 February 1929.
47. Ibid.

Given almost unanimous press hostility, the denial of access to broadcasting would, he argued, close off the only avenue (apart from the Daily Herald) for the Party to express itself before a mass public audience. Significantly MacDonald was convinced that the Conservatives did not want any political broadcasting for this reason. Yet he asked Reith if he would resurrect his original plans for party political broadcasting if Labour and the Conservatives could agree on them, disregarding the Liberal view. Reith and Clarendon indicated that they would accept a majority decision while holding out hope for all-party agreement. Later, MacDonald repeated his willingness to accept almost anything to get on the air and urged that unless the BBC accepted a majority decision 'nothing at all will be done', adding that 'we are...most anxious to use the wireless'. (48)

Against his original intention Reith found himself assuming the thankless role of mediator, though with some success: both Labour and Liberal Parties accepted the Corporation's original scheme as a basis for election broadcasting during the 1929 General Election, under 'very decided protest'. (49) But the path to the microphone was still strewn with pitfalls. MacDonald, during his interview with Reith and Clarendon, had persuaded them to arrange broadcasts on the AB AC basis in the two months remaining before the dissolution of Parliament. But he insisted that a single broadcast talk for Labour was insufficient, and proposed three sets of speeches on the AB AC basis; this was later reduced to two sets, for the pre-dissolution period, on condition that there were two sets on the ABC basis for the period of the Election itself. By the last week of March agreement had been reached, (50) only to disintegrate again as each Party tried to secure the most favourable sequence within the agreed formula. MacDonald for example wanted the sequence to reflect the status of the Labour Party as the Official Opposition: he wanted the Party's speakers to be able to close both the pre-dissolution talks (making the sequence AB AC, AC AB) and those during the Election (making the sequence ABC, ACB). (51) With

48. PRO MacDonald Papers 30/69/5/40, MacDonald to Reith 9 March 1929.

49. Ibid.; BBC, P.GE., Samuel to Reith, 22 March 1929.

50. BBC, P.GE., Reith to MacDonald, 25 March 1929.

51. Ibid., MacDonald to Reith, 2 April 1929.

Samuel's acceptance came Davidson's refusal, on the basis that two sets of speeches during the election period gave the combined Opposition Parties a total of four speeches to the Government's two. (52) Forewarned of this, Reith had publicly announced the previous day the BBC's scheme for party political broadcasting before and during the Election, pre-empting any further objections by MacDonald and Samuel which would cause further delay: the scheme included only one set of talks for the period of the Election, in the sequence CBA, following the precedent of 1924. (53) For MacDonald this was thoroughly unsatisfactory. He had already revealed to Reith that the Labour Party suspected the BBC was 'wangling so as to handicap us'. (54) He was also already convinced that Labour had been put in an impossible position by Davidson, whose uncompromising stance he interpreted as calculated to prevent the Party from ever using the microphone. He had appealed to Reith to accept a majority decision otherwise nothing would be done; and now a scheme had been publicised, without consultation, which accorded with all the demands made by Davidson as a condition of his (Davidson's) agreement to the scheme at all. (55) MacDonald apparently threatened to drop out of the scheme 'if they are going to try to manipulate things', (56) but this was almost certainly a public gesture of defiance, a hollow bluff which Reith would probably not have taken seriously. Nevertheless, MacDonald had his suspicions:

The whole thing has a most unpleasant savour in my nostrils. It may all have been perfectly innocent, but I really must say that an innocent creature has never been cursed with a more sinister countenance. (57)

He then used this point to add weight to his claim, made originally in March, that in view of the importance of the newly enfranchised women voters an address should be made by representatives of the women's section

52. BBC, P.GE., Davidson to Reith, 5 April 1929.
53. The Times, 5 April 1929; BBC, P.GE., Reith to MacDonald, 4 April 1929.
54. BBC, P.GE., MacDonald to Reith, 2 April 1929.
55. Ibid., MacDonald to Reith, 9 March 1929; Reith to MacDonald, 4 April 1929; PRO MacDonald Papers 30/69/5/40, MacDonald to Reith, 8 April 1929.
56. Sunday Graphic, 7 April 1929, cited in A. Briggs, The Golden Age of Wireless op.cit., p.133.
57. PRO MacDonald Papers 30/69/5/40, MacDonald to Reith, 8 April 1929.

of each Party, during the period of the Election itself. There followed a new round of negotiations on this issue and the sequence for each set of talks, with Davidson insisting that the Government should have the final date for both the pre- and post-dissolution series; and again threatening that if this condition was not accepted the Government would withdraw its support for the additional series of post-dissolution talks by women representatives. (58)

An agreement was finally achieved, over a year after Henderson's original request for facilities to be made available for MacDonald to make a statement in respect of the next election; only six weeks before the poll; and in the middle of the pre-dissolution talks. The final arrangement was accepted by each Party under protest and with no prejudice to negotiations over future elections. As Reith put it, 'the equal discontent of all three parties...was the only criterion of impartiality in the circumstances'. (59) For the pre-dissolution talks (8 April - 3 May) the sequence was AB AC, AC AB; and for the Election period (13 - 29 May), CBA, CBA. Henderson, Snowden, Margaret Bondfield and MacDonald gave Labour's broadcasts. As a matter of BBC policy all talks were given in the studio, and speakers were invited to the studio for rehearsals, voice tests and general advice on presentation. Again it appears that only Baldwin showed any interest in the composition of his likely audience and the context in which it would be listening. (60) MacDonald's broadcast was dismissed by Reith as 'ineffective'; Snowden's he regarded as the 'best of all'. (61)

Labour's attempts to gain access to the medium of radio for party political purposes unearthed the complexities contingent upon the principle of 'fairness' to which the Crawford Report committed the BBC in recommending that a moderate amount of controversy should be broadcast. The suspicions which the negotiations between the Parties fuelled in the minds of Labour leaders were hardened by the role which Reith

58. BBC., P.GE., Davidson to Reith, 18 April 1929.

59. J.C.W.Reith, Into the Wind op.cit., p.131.

60. BBC, Lord Reith Papers, Baldwin to Reith, 13 April 1929.

61. J.C.W.Reith, Into the Wind, op.cit., p.131. For a different view of Snowden's talk, see S.Hibberd, 'This - Is London.....' (London, 1950), p.45. For comments on Henderson's talk from the point of view of local opinion, see M.Pegg, Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939 (London, 1983), p.187.

was perceived to be performing. This suspicion was not diminished by Labour's experience in seeking to secure opportunities for broadcasting on political subjects generally.

The delicacy of the negotiations with the Labour Party can be inferred from the lengths to which the Corporation was prepared to go to avoid giving Labour leaders any grounds for criticism during the period in which such negotiations over party political broadcasting took place. Instructions were sent to all stations that Head Office should see manuscripts in advance of all talks or discussions of a controversial or provocative nature; and where such talks or discussions were taken up they were to be handled by Head Office. (62) In the case of the North Regional Director's plan to broadcast a series on 'Trade Tendencies in the Industrial North' specific instructions were issued to

ensure that the speakers should keep clear of any references which might be construed as controversial on labour lines. (63)

Similarly, the complexity of the BBC's position in negotiations with the Labour Party is revealed in the Controversy Committee's discussions concerning Ministerial statements. Under existing practice Ministers were granted opportunities for explaining in a non-partisan way pieces of legislation passing through the House which were not the subject of acute controversy. The Minister of Agriculture, W. Guinness, had asked to give a talk on the question of marking eggs, an issue the controversy surrounding which had only recently subsided. The usual practice would have been automatic approval for such a talk. But with an election in sight the very fact of a Minister dealing in person with such an issue would appear, in the view of the Controversy Committee, doubly controversial - in rekindling the old controversy, and, in giving the Government of the day a public platform for explaining policy, granting a publicity advantage, as under existing practice no right of reply was available. What concerned the Controversy Committee was not simply that permission for the talk would offend Labour sensitivities. It would set a precedent of which 'a future government which might be without a powerful press' (that is, a Labour Government) would justly try to take advantage. (64) The Director of Talks Hilda Matheson conjured

62. BBC, Controversy Committee Minutes, 25 January 1929, 1 March 1929.

63. Ibid., 1 February 1929.

64. Ibid.

up the prospect of a beleaguered Labour Government resorting to this precedent to explain its policies on a regular basis, and such a reliance could be compromising for the Corporation. The Committee agreed that no Ministerial statement should be made under present circumstances, but that a permanent official of the Department concerned could give a talk.

No matter what precautions were taken to avoid offending Labour it was likely that over the question of general political talks problems would arise. In fact very few opportunities arose for Labour leaders to broadcast between March 1928, when the veto on controversial broadcasting was lifted, and May 1929, when the General Election took place. Using the categories of political broadcasting defined by the Corporation's Director of Talks, the limited scope of Labour's use of the medium can be clearly demonstrated. (65) Only one Party Political Studio Talk or Discussion (Category I) was arranged in this period, at the request of Neville Chamberlain. As already indicated, attempts were made by Reith to organise regular talks involving party political discussions, on issues of current controversy. With the three Parties unable to agree on a scheme Reith invited the Party Leaders to discuss, in succession on the same evening, a matter of acute controversy which had an importance over and above any consideration of the state of negotiations regarding a general scheme for party political broadcasting. (66) The result was a discussion on the 22 January 1929 on the De-Rating Bill, in which Sir Kingsley Wood, Arthur Greenwood and Ramsay Muir took part. Each speaker had twenty minutes, with Wood, representing the Government point of view, being given a further ten minutes to reply in view of the 'extra burden of responsibility on the Government of the day'. (67)

Due to Party disagreement no other discussion in this category was arranged before the second Labour Government took office. No Labour representative took part in Speeches by Ministers and other Political Leaders on Special Non-Party Political Occasions (Outside Broadcasts), (Category IV), which included the Lord Mayor's Banquet and the Dinner

65. For full definitions of these categories, see BEC, P.G., 'Political Broadcasting', 6 November 1930, written by Matheson.
66. Ibid., Reith to Samuel, 30 January 1929.
67. Ibid., Policy. Political Broadcasting. Accusations of Party Bias., Carpendale to Davidson, 12 October 1928. (Hereafter, 'P.APB.')
- Unfortunately the Talks file on the De-Rating Bill discussion is missing.

of the Royal Institute of International Affairs. Labour leaders did occasionally take part in Studio Talks by Ministers and other Political Leaders on Non-Political Subjects (Category III). Snowden, for example, gave a talk on 'The Preservation of Rural England'. But the only real opportunities for Labour politicians or trade union leaders to use the medium to discuss political issues came in the form of Discussions and Symposiums which may involve Political Opinions (Category VII). James Maxton took issue with Sir Ernest Benn on the subject of 'Riches and Poverty', the first political discussion of any kind ever broadcast in Britain, on the 18 May 1928. Ellen Wilkinson discussed the issue of 'Equal Pay' with W.H.Thoday; J.H.Thomas argued the merits of 'Road v. Rail' with Colonel Moore Brabazon; and Dr.Marion Phillips examined the need for 'Protective Legislation for Women Workers' with Mrs.Abbott. In all, eight such discussions in this period gave Labour politicians opportunities to use the medium. But only one trade union leader, Walter Citrine, used the radio in this way, in a symposium on 'Tendencies in Modern Industry'. The only other category of political broadcasting in which Labour could take part was Single Talks or Series of Talks (not by Ministers or Politicians) dealing with or incidentally referring to Political Events or Theories (Category VI). Harold Laski for example gave a series of six talks on 'Social Purpose'. Remaining categories were Studio Talks by Ministers and Officials on the Work of Public Departments or some aspect of National Policy (Non-Party) (Category II), which included the Budget and legislation passing through Parliament, providing it was not the subject of acute controversy; and Speeches by Ministers on Non-Political Occasions (Category V), such as the Civil Service Dinner, the Royal Academy Banquet and the Dickens Fellowship.

Unsurprisingly, Labour leaders were not au fait with these categories, and the frequency with which Government Ministers gave talks (under Category II), the regularity with which Labour requests for facilities appear to have been turned down, and the treatment received at the hands of the Corporation when permission was granted, gave rise to much resentment. Before the veto on controversy had been lifted Labour had already gained an insight into the rigorous censorship exercised by the BBC. The General Council of the TUC intended to hold a meeting at a TUC-sponsored college in grounds owned by Lady Warwick. J.R.Clynes invited the BBC to broadcast speeches by Lady Warwick and Arthur Pugh of the General Council. The talks were described by Clynes as 'non-political'

to which neither the Post Office nor the public could take exception. (68) Gladstone Murray (Assistant Controller (Information)) regarded the talks as 'dangerously near the partisan' and sought the guidance of F.W.Phillips at the Post Office. (69) Clynes subsequently submitted scripts for inspection, and Phillips returned them to Murray with excisions. The original text of Pugh's talk included the following, with the excisions underlined:

The fundamental aim of all these educational activities is to enable the workers to develop their capacity for effective service within the organised working class movement, and the means whereby those taking up responsible leadership in Trade Union, Cooperative and other working-class organisations, or as representatives on public bodies, can be better equipped for the duties thus undertaken. (70)

Clynes had to give assurances that the speaker would adhere to the amended draft, and the talk was given on the 24 February 1926. To a large degree Labour speakers acquiesced in this treatment, knowing that otherwise they would never get the opportunity to broadcast. But when the veto on controversy was lifted in March 1928 it appears that expectations had changed. Snowden for example took exception to having to submit his script for his talk on 'The Preservation of Rural England'. (71) Moreover, requests for facilities were frequently turned down. A proposed debate between the Cooperative Wholesale Society and the National Traders' Defence League was considered too risky, as it 'would stir up feeling rather than reach any useful conclusion', especially as the Cooperative movement 'was now definitely political'. (72) A.J.Cook, who was considered an 'unsuitable speaker' by the Corporation, was refused permission to broadcast a talk on the subject of May Day. (73) The National Union of Railwaymen unsuccessfully requested to be able to broadcast speeches from their Annual Conference; and a request by the Chemical Workers' Union for facilities, based on complaints that Walter Citrine of the TUC did not represent the views of one particular

68. BBC, Talks. Trades Union Congress., J.R.Clynes to Murray, 15 February 1926.
69. Ibid., Murray to Stobart, 15 February 1926.
70. Ibid., Phillips to Murray, 19 February 1926, to which is appended the amended draft. The word 'similar' was substituted for the second set of excised words.
71. Ibid., Controversy Committee Minutes, 28 March 1928.
72. Ibid., 12 July 1928, 13 December 1928.
73. Ibid., 25 October 1928, 22 March 1929. Cook was allowed to broadcast an appeal on behalf of the Lord Mayor's Fund for Distressed Miners.

section of the trade union movement during the symposium on 'Tendencies in Modern Industry', was rejected by Charles Siepmann on the grounds that Citrine represented the 'official Trade Union point of view'. (74) Snowden was unable to broadcast on the question of the rating of land values, and MacDonald was denied the opportunity to broadcast on the occasion of the opening of Transport House. (75) There were of course good reasons for the Corporation to refuse facilities: in the case of Snowden for example plans were already underway for a full-scale political debate on this issue. But what appeared at first to be nothing particularly unreasonable gradually began to appear less than fair. A test-case arose with the Budget Speech delivered by Churchill on 25 April 1928. The terms under which the speech was given were specifically non-partisan. The Corporation had already acknowledged privately that it was 'not always easy to draw the line between partisan opinion and statement of fact', (76) and this proved to be the case with the Chancellor. MacDonald complained that Churchill's statement was in fact a party statement: 'you really cannot draw a line between a factual speech and a Party one - especially when Churchill delivers it', and requested that Snowden be allowed to 'give a similar factual statement'. (77) The Corporation's refusal to grant such facilities was justified on grounds that the Government of the day should be allowed to explain its Budget, and that no complaint had been made when the Labour Party agreed to the original scheme for political broadcasting, wherein opportunities would be given for the Government to explain its policies generally. (78)

The Labour Party was further frustrated at plans by the Corporation to allow Walter Elliott, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Scotland, to talk on the subject of the Western Highlands and Islands Transport Services Bill, which Lindsay, the Party Secretary, regarded as an infringement of the rule of scrupulous fairness. Reith replied

74. BBC., Controversy Committee Minutes, 17 May 1929, 8 November 1928.

75. Ibid., 4 June 1928, 25 April 1928.

76. Ibid., P.APB., Reith to F.W.Phillips, 12 June 1925; ibid., P.GE., Matheson to R.Eckersley, 20 December 1928.

77. Ibid., Policy. Political Broadcasting. Budget., MacDonald to Reith, 1 May 1928. (Hereafter, 'P.B.')

78. Ibid., Controversy Committee Minutes, 2 May 1928.

that Major Elliott 'was speaking as a Minister and not as a member of the Conservative Party' and his talk would be a non-party explanation of the Bill. (79) Lindsay did not accept Reith's explanation, and inquired as to the likely BBC response if MacDonald requested facilities to broadcast on the Bill, not as a member of the Labour Party, but as Leader of His Majesty's Official Opposition. (80)

The distinction between non-party Ministerial statements and partisan political broadcasts was a fine one which easily became lost as Labour politicians grew increasingly exasperated at the apparent ease with which the Government was able to broadcast to the nation. The mere fact of explaining an Act was an attempt to gain some credit for it, and gave an opportunity for publicity which was denied other parties. It was however a developing field, in which the ground rules were crystallising, but had not taken permanent form, and one which offered a future Labour administration unprecedented opportunities.

Indeed the second Labour Government lost little time in exercising the right of access for the Government of the day, provided both by precedent and continuing practice. There was no change of policy within the Corporation regarding Ministerial speeches, and Labour Ministers took every opportunity to use the microphone after MacDonald had broadcast to the nation as Prime Minister on 8 June. For the period June to December 1929 the Government used the BBC for Ministerial statements on fourteen occasions, equalling the previous administration's Ministerial use of radio for the whole of 1928, and prompting Conservative criticism that there were too many Government broadcasts. (81) During the following year there were also fourteen Ministerial broadcasts. Thereafter a new agreement was reached on political broadcasting. The same opportunities were available for such statements, but, dependent upon Liberal support, the momentum of the Government slumped. Its legislative programme was effectively destroyed by the mauling which Bills received in the House of Lords, and by Liberal amendments at

79. BBC, P.MB., Lindsay to Reith, 15 November 1928; Reith to Lindsay, 16 November 1928.

80. Ibid., Lindsay to Reith, 20 November 1928.

81. Ibid., P.APB., Davidson to Reith, 9 October 1929.

committee stage. There were therefore few occasions during 1931 when Ministers could legitimately broadcast on the work of their departments and on new legislation. Indeed, the only Ministerial statements broadcast between January and August 1931 were MacDonald's speech on the India Round Table Conference (20 January) and Snowden's Budget talk. While there is no evidence to suggest that Labour leaders regarded this as symptomatic of the BBC's jaundiced treatment of the Party, there was nevertheless a degree of cynicism in Snowden's response to Reith's suggestion in February 1931 that the Budget speech should be part of a series of party political talks. The rationale of Reith's proposal was that every year the impartiality of the Budget speech had been questioned, and that he now found it difficult to see how such a talk could be strictly non-partisan. (82) Replying for the Chancellor, Kennedy insisted that the Budget statement must stand by itself: 'To include it in the list of political talks would deprive the Government of one broadcast opportunity'. (83)

Meanwhile, renewed attempts were made to draw up a scheme for political broadcasting satisfactory to all three main parties. The BBC's Controversy Committee had already placed on record prior to the 1929 General Election that

the political broadcasts upto date had been lacking in interest, were not fulfilling the functions for which they were intended, and were not good programme value....these broadcasts tended to discredit politics and entirely failed to fulfil the expectations from a broadcasting point of view which the Corporation had in mind when it initiated proposals regarding them. (84)

The inability of the three parties to agree a scheme for political broadcasting was not merely a source of exasperation for the Corporation; it further encouraged Reith and his colleagues to move away from the original concept of party political talks under normal conditions as the centrepiece of political broadcasting. Public demand for such broadcasts was, Hilda Matheson argued, limited, and the demand for space

82. BBC., P.B., Reith to Kennedy, 18 March 1931. Kennedy was the Labour Chief Whip.

83. Ibid., Kennedy to Reith, 17 March 1931.

84. Ibid., Controversy Committee Minutes, 19 April 1929.

in the weekly schedule from other 'equally important' services such as entertainment, information and education was so great that

The BBC would not feel justified in setting aside regular weekly periods for party political broadcasts, since this would inevitably entail the cancellation of other services of wider and more general appeal. (85)

Moreover, where issues of national importance were to be examined, Matheson identified a keen desire amongst listeners to hear not just the views of the Party Leaders but of independent experts. She recommended that at election times, and moments of national emergency, the initiative for political broadcasting should be largely with the political parties. But ordinarily the treatment of questions of current controversy should be decided by the Corporation; the form of treatment should be the symposium or discussion; and the contributors should be drawn from both political parties and independent experts. She also reaffirmed the importance of allowing Ministers of the Crown opportunities to broadcast on legislation, the work of Public Departments, and items of national interest such as the Budget. (86)

Political broadcasting then, held in prospect in March 1928 as an exciting new departure, had become by June 1929 a wearisome and frustrating exercise in patience for Reith and his colleagues as repeated attempts to secure agreement with the three main parties failed. Following the formation of the Labour Government no new initiatives were made by Reith or Matheson, as they tried to re-think their approach to the question of political broadcasting, and the negotiations with the parties were allowed to subside. Political subjects were certainly given air-time. Ethel Snowden for example gave a talk on 'Why Women want Peace', Sir John Simon examined 'The Future of Indian Government', Beatrice Webb discussed the question of 'The Reform of British Parliamentary Government', and Sir Josiah Stamp and J.M.Keynes discussed 'Unemployment'. But Ministerial broadcasts apart, there was no party political broadcasting from the inception of the Labour Government until a new arrangement was drawn up in November 1930. The issue, shelved in June 1929, was resurrected with the discovery that the BBC was apparently acting on its own initiative to arrange ad hoc talks of

85. BBC, P.PPB., H.Matheson, Memorandum on Political Broadcasting, 31 July 1930.

86. Ibid.

a party political nature, without seeking any general agreement from or involvement of the Party Leaders.

Lord Beaverbrook had applied to the Corporation in November 1929 for permission to broadcast on Empire Free Trade. The BBC agreed, on condition that a reply was given by a prominent opponent: Reith did not regard it as a party issue, and therefore the Party Whips were not consulted. (87) With the formation of the United Empire Party in February 1930 the planned broadcasts assumed a party political character, as Beaverbrook's views would be taken to be an exposition of the policies of that Party. The Corporation's position was that since the commitment to allow Beaverbrook to broadcast could not be relinquished, then the example of the De-Rating Bill discussion should be applied, giving each of the three Parties a single broadcast talk. (88) The Prime Minister was informed of this in March, and expressed 'amazement' at the scheme, since it was a breach of the precedent of that debate, whereby the Government was granted equality of opportunity with the sum of the other Parties. MacDonald assumed that the agreement of 1929 still applied, and once again believed that the BBC had been less than fair towards the Labour Party - a Party which now expected to enjoy the advantages of office which the Corporation had bestowed on the Conservatives prior to June 1929. (89) The Prime Minister's displeasure was sufficient to elicit from Reith an indication that he would cancel the talk, if MacDonald wished, without associating the Government with it, and this was done. (90)

The affair prompted MacDonald to re-open the question of party political broadcasting, since it was clear that the BBC's decision to act without prior consultation with the Parties loosened their control not only of the issues which were to be debated, but also of the people who were to gain access to the airwaves. Moreover, from Labour's point of view, the precedent set by the De-Rating Bill debate, of the Government's right of reply to each Opposition Party, was a principle to be defended at a time when even the Corporation was willing to

87. BBC., P.PPB., Reith to G.Fry (Conservative Central Office), 17 February 1930.
88. Ibid., Memorandum on Lord Beaverbrook, 19 February 1930. There is no clear indication as to who wrote this memorandum.
89. Ibid., C.P.Duff to Reith, 4 March 1930. Duff was MacDonald's Private Secretary.
90. Ibid., Reith to Duff, 4 March 1930.

ignore it. Consequently inter-party negotiations resumed within days of Beaverbrook's talk being jettisoned. But nothing had been agreed by June and Reith proposed a symposium, to be opened by Beaverbrook, on the question of Empire Free Trade, adding that it was 'desirable' to secure 'the concurrence and cooperation of the Whips as to procedure'. (91) Owing to pressure of work little progress was made by the three Whips, and Reith, forcing the issue, proposed a detailed plan for the symposium. Again, MacDonald was 'amazed' that the BBC should take upon itself responsibility for arranging a series of party political broadcasts contrary to the understanding that no such talks could be decided upon without the prior agreement of the three Parties. The 'serious breach' of this understanding was 'one to which the Government could not remain indifferent'. (92) So strongly did MacDonald feel that the Corporation was abusing its position, to Labour's detriment, that he issued a warning:

The Government has no desire to interfere with BBC programmes, but it cannot be disinterested regarding the political use made by it of its opportunities.....The only way the BBC can protect itself is by planning its political broadcasting in close cooperation with the Parties. (93)

MacDonald believed that, unfortunate though it was that the Whips had not come to agreement, this could not justify Reith's independent action. Moreover, as Kennedy later explained to Lord Gainford, the Vice-Chairman of the Board of Governors, any extension of broadcast discussion beyond the confines of the three main political Parties created difficulties which did not arise in connection with party political talks. The implication was that Reith's action had immeasurably complicated an already problematic situation, and in effect put in jeopardy the three-Party negotiations. (94) This view was reiterated at an all-Party meeting with Reith and Gainford in the House of Commons following the BBC's decision to allow Beaverbrook to

91. BBC, P.PPB., Reith to T.Kennedy, 25 June 1930.
92. Ibid., N.Butler to J.H.Whitley, 7 August 1930. Butler was MacDonald's Political Secretary.
93. Ibid., H.G.Vincent to Whitley, 16 August 1930. Vincent was MacDonald's Private Secretary.
94. Ibid., Kennedy to Gainford, 31 October 1930.

broadcast on the 27 November. The three Parties protested against this recognition of the United Empire Party, and refused to participate in the series, suggesting an independent expert should be asked to reply to Beaverbrook. Nevertheless a basis of agreement for future political broadcasting was achieved. (95) The scheme consisted of five sections. Under Section A, Party Political Speeches, the Corporation would allocate two or three months each year during which period the microphone would be available one night every week to the Parties in a rota along the lines of the formula Labour 9, Conservative 8, Liberal 5. Both subjects and speakers would be decided by the Parties. During a General Election there would be a rota for the pre-dissolution period, and equal opportunity during the post-dissolution period.

Under Section B, Discussions, there would be an hour's discussion periodically on party political issues of current interest. There would be one speaker for each Party; but if the issue arose from a Government measure, then the Government would have the right of reply. Subjects would be chosen by the BBC. In addition other politically controversial subjects which did not necessarily fall along party lines would be discussed periodically. Symposiums (Section C) included party political issues as well as issues which did not fall on party lines; and independent experts would be invited to contribute. Finally, there were Section D, Factual Expositions, by Ministers or independent commentators who would explain measures passed by Parliament; Section E, Broadcasts by Ministers on national occasions; and Section F, Information and Non-Controversial Talks on political, economic and social questions by Public Departments. (96)

At a subsequent conference on the 18 November the procedure for implementing this scheme was clarified. The Parties noted the claim of the BBC that the Corporation could not be bound in every case to secure their agreement as a preliminary to proceeding with a political broadcast. However,

95. BBC, P.PPB., Record of the Meeting in the House of Commons, 4 November 1930.

96. Ibid., Draft Memorandum on Political Broadcasting, 5 November 1930.

it was held that if the BBC proceeded in face of failure to secure such an agreement, the question of the proper use of the Corporation's discretionary power might be re-opened.... (97)

The scheme, it was proposed, would last until the end of 1931 or the calling of a General Election, whichever was sooner. Within three weeks agreement was reached on a symposium on 'Unemployment', to be broadcast during January and February 1931 - the first party political debate since January 1929 (excluding the General Election), but also the first in which independent experts took part and the Government speakers neither had the right of reply nor the opportunity to go last. In order of broadcast, the speakers were Professor Henry Clay, J.M.Keynes, B.Seebohm Rowntree (Liberal), Herbert Morrison (Labour), Stanley Baldwin (Conservative). The evident success of this form of broadcast encouraged Reith to propose a debate on 'The Effects of Tariffs on Employment', and the talks, given in May, were confined to the three Parties, with the Conservatives again enjoying the advantage which was believed to accrue from speaking last. Other talks were planned but jettisoned following the publication of the May Report on 31 July and the financial crisis which it precipitated.

With the political crisis which followed in August, the demise of the second Labour Government, and the manner in which it fell, created a complex situation which nullified the agreement on political broadcasting of November 1930 and made previous precedents regarding General Election broadcasting equally inapplicable. The problem stemmed from the splits in both Labour and Liberal Parties, and the formation of a National Government representing Conservative, National Labour, and Samuelite Liberal. The decision to hold an election was taken on 5 October, and each constituent Party of the coalition was to issue its own election programme. Parliament was dissolved two days later. Yet the BBC only started to consider the question of election broadcasting on the 2 October. In drawing up plans Matheson assumed that there would be 'two main bodies of opinion to be placed before the country'. (98) By which she meant that body of opinion which supported

97. BBC, P.PPE., Amended Draft Memorandum on Political Broadcasting, in Kennedy to Reith, 4 December 1930.

98. Ibid., P.GE., Matheson to Reith, 2 October 1931.

the National Government, and that which opposed it. But she accepted that it may be necessary to find space to accommodate minority views, such as Sir Oswald Mosley's New Party. Arthur Henderson, now Labour Leader, insisted that there should be as many speakers against the Government as for it, and that the Labour Opposition wanted as many broadcasts as all the other opponents of the Government put together.(99) A provisional list of Labour 3, Conservative 2, National Labour 2, Liberal 2, National Liberal 1, and New Party 1, provoked Henderson to demand 4 broadcasts.(100) The allocations had been devised by Reith and Major Glyn, MacDonald's Parliamentary Private Secretary, apparently without full consultation of the Parties. The documentation for these negotiations is scant, the urgency of the situation presumably leading to much of the bargaining being done by telephone or without any formal record of discussion being made. Certainly, the laborious procedure which occasioned the 1929 Election was not repeated; and the BBC appears to have conferred upon Glyn considerable authority for the purpose of reaching a quick decision.(101) The programme of election broadcasts was issued on 12 October, the day before it was to commence. The basic pattern appears to conform to the 1929 arrangement, of equal allocation to the main Parties, with slight modifications, presumably to accommodate Lloyd George and disarm Labour criticism.

Ten broadcasts were made between 13 - 24 October, six by representatives of the National Government (two Conservative, two National Labour and two Liberal - one Samuelite, one Simonite), three by the Labour Party, and one by Lloyd George. (102) J.R.Clynes, William Graham and Arthur Henderson spoke for Labour, while MacDonald and Snowden spoke for National Labour, on behalf of the National Government. Not standing for re-election, Snowden had no need of restraint, and his 'Bolshevism run mad' speech had an electrifying effect. J.H.Thomas, who followed MacDonald and Snowden in joining the National Government, later described the Election as 'the cruellest and most brutal election I have ever seen'. (103) Snowden felt little remorse over his venomous

99. Reith, *Diary*, 8 October 1931, cited in A.Briggs, The Golden Age of Wireless op.cit., pp.138-9.

100. BBC, P.GE., Reith to Samuel, 8 October 1931.

101. See for example, ibid., Reith to R.G.C.Glyn, 12 October 1931.

102. Baldwin was the only Conservative speaker, broadcasting twice.

103. Cited by G.Blaxland, J.H.Thomas: A Life for Unity (London, 1964), p.255.

criticism of his former colleagues and believed that his broadcast influenced the outcome of the Election.(104) Be that as it may, the broadcasts by Clynes, Graham and Henderson were regarded as poor and damaging to the Labour case.(105) It was perhaps partly an awareness of this poor technique, and the consummate skill of Baldwin and to a lesser extent MacDonald, which prompted recriminations. Clynes complained that 'the wireless was overweighted against us';(106) and the TUC and the Labour Party NEC issued a joint statement protesting against the 'preferential treatment accorded by the BBC to the National Government in political broadcasts'.(107) There had already been some ill-feeling over the way in which the National Government had used the radio prior to the dissolution of Parliament to appeal for support and justify its policies.(108) Still reeling from the shock of the Election disaster the Labour Party's NEC tried to restore something from the wreckage, and resolved to complain to the Postmaster General about 'the grave injustice suffered by the Labour Party'.(109) The Official Opposition, as the National Joint Council's statement to Reith maintained, was given 'no single opportunity of broadcasting their case to the public' prior to 7 October, 'whereas there were several broadcasts by Ministers and supporters of the National Government'.(110) The Government did in fact have five broadcasts between 25 August and 7 October, and other speakers such as Henry Clay of the Bank of England were also

104. P.Snowden, An Autobiography vol.2 (London, 1934), p.995. The text of his speech is reproduced, pp.1059 - 1064. Leo Amery has described Snowden's talk as 'horribly effective', in his My Political Life vol.3 (London, 1955), p.70.
105. Manchester Guardian, 24 October 1931; P.Snowden, An Autobiography, op.cit., p.995.
106. The Times, 28 October 1931, p.8.
107. BBC, P.G.E., National Joint Council to Reith, 10 November 1931.
108. See for example, LPNEC, National Executive Committee Minutes, 'Women and the Political Situation', a statement by the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, 28 September 1931.
109. Ibid., National Executive Committee Minutes, 10 November 1931.
110. BBC, P.G.E., National Joint Council to Reith, 10 November 1931.

considered to have broadcast in support of National Government policies.(111) The imbalance in the allocation of talks, and the 'partisan advice' given by the announcer during news bulletins on the eve of the poll, led the NJC to regard the BBC's role during the Election period as a definite breach of its functions and powers, 'as a public corporation divorced from politics'.(112) The experience was a bitter one, intensified by the resentment and recrimination which were inevitable given the circumstances in which Labour fell from power and had to face an election not only opposed by its own leaders of long-standing, but also presented to the electorate by Labour's opponents as supporting sectional rather than national interests.

3.

In 1931 the political shock-waves generated by the Corporation's contribution to the General Election subsided only after the 1935 General Election. Convinced that there was a political bias against the Labour Party, Labour leaders were primed to take issue with the BBC on any aspect of its policy and programme output which could be construed as disadvantageous to the movement. The basis of these complaints was that the BBC was in breach of its obligations, as indicated by the Postmaster General in 1928, to ensure fair and equitable treatment as between the main Parties in the question of political broadcasting. Their central theme was that the Corporation, while granting access to facilities, was denying equality of access with the Government.

It was not long before the BBC, in an untypical moment of bad-timing, provoked the TUC into vigorous protest. On 14 May 1932 the Corporation broadcast a retrospective of the first ten years of broadcasting in Britain, included in which was a survey of the General Strike. Walter Citrine, General Secretary of the TUC General Council, complained to Whitley, Chairman of the Board of Governors, of the 'one-sided and biased' nature of the programme, pointing out that no attempt had been made to give the Trade Union point of view.(113) Citrine demanded an explanation of BBC policy, in the event of further

111. LPNEC, National Executive Committee Minutes, A.Henderson, Report on 'The General Election', 10 November 1931.

112. BBC, P.G.E., National Joint Council to Reith, 10 November 1931.

113. TUC 1932, p.225.

industrial disputes. At the subsequent meeting of Whitley and a deputation of the General Council, on 7 June, Citrine asked whether, in the event of such disputes, the BBC became an instrument of the Government.(114)

In itself the 'Retrospective' was a minor issue which gave Labour leaders an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the BBC and suggest that the Corporation ought to take more notice of Labour sensitivities in programme design. But it served as yet one more instance of bias, fuelling the resentment which was simmering at Transport House. After the experience of 1931 it took little to cause offence there, but in September the following year a curious combination of circumstances created an intensely bitter atmosphere. Apart from a series of three talks on the War Loan Conversion Scheme, in which Lansbury, now Labour Leader, participated in July, there were no political broadcasts on issues of party political controversy until the autumn of 1932. The Talks Department had abandoned the idea of reserving the majority of political talks for politicians as both unworkable and undesirable, preferring a much broader spectrum of opinion to be represented, and one which did not become distorted by party political needs.(115) At the instigation of the Prime Minister in September 1932 the BBC dispensed with the agreement concerning political broadcasting negotiated in November 1930, and established a small inter-Party consultative committee to advise the Corporation on political talks. The Parliamentary Advisory Panel was unofficial, and the Party representatives were chosen, without prior consultation with their Leaders, by the BBC. Plans were immediately drawn up by the Talks Department for a series of talks on major political issues, such as 'Unemployment' and 'The Means Test'; and Arthur Greenwood and Sir Stafford Cripps of the Labour Party's NEC were invited to take part. The manner in which this was done was interpreted by Lansbury as contrary to the 1930 agreement, according to which the Party Leaders were to be contacted by the BBC in advance of any series of talks on party political issues being drawn up. Lansbury saw in this unilateral action by the BBC a dangerous precedent:

114. TUC 1932, p.225.

115. BBC, P.G., C.Siepmann to Reith, 21 June 1932.

the selection of the issue is a matter of vital importance. It would be quite possible to have a programme of discussions dealing with political questions which would focus the public attention on certain aspects of public affairs without giving the Opposition the opportunity of bringing into relief the particular matters upon which they think the general public should be enlightened. (116)

In view of the BBC's apparent disregard of the 1930 agreement, he argued, new discussions between the Parties concerning the arrangements and procedures for political broadcasting were needed; and the right of Party Leaders to choose speakers should be reaffirmed.

It was at precisely this moment that circumstances beyond the Corporation's control pitched the BBC into a political minefield. Snowden and Samuel resigned from the Cabinet on the 28 September. As Free Traders they could not accept the protectionist terms of the Ottawa Agreements; and their departure not only raised an issue of national importance, but placed in doubt the 'national' character of the National Government. With MacDonald's approval the BBC agreed to the request of Snowden and Samuel to explain their views to the nation, and Baldwin and Simon were to reply for the Government. On hearing of this series of talks Lansbury immediately requested facilities for the Official Opposition to put forward its view on the issues 'which brought about the break-up of the Government'. (117) Whitley in reply explained how the talks came about, and insisted that it would have been 'improper' to introduce other speakers into this series, since the broadcasts were not concerned with the issues which caused the resignation, but with the issue of Ministerial resignations, which was not a subject of Party controversy. (118) Lansbury rejected this explanation and called into question the consistency of the Corporation's policy. With reference to the differences within the second Labour Government over the problem of how to reduce unemployment, he doubted that the BBC would have allowed four broadcasts by members of the Government to explain their views and refused the Conservative Opposition opportunities to broadcast on the subject. By preventing Labour from putting forward its views in reply to the resignation broadcasts the BBC, Lansbury argued, was indicating to the public that only the Liberals had objections to the Ottawa Agreements. Moreover, the BBC was treating the matter as if

116. British Library of Political and Economic Science, Lansbury Papers, vol.10, f277, Lansbury to Whitley, 27 September 1932.

117. Ibid., vol.10, f261, Lansbury to Whitley, 29 September 1932.

118. BBC, P.G., Whitley to Lansbury, 30 September 1932, 4 October 1932.

it was internal to the Government, providing facilities to sections within the National Government - a policy which had been specifically rejected by the three Parties in their agreement of November 1930. In effect, the BBC was denying the Official Opposition the right of reply in a situation in which the Government had four broadcasts on an issue of national importance. What made the matter even worse, Lansbury insisted, was that both Snowden and Samuel attacked Labour policy during their talks.(119)

Whitley offered Lansbury the opportunity to broadcast, in the form of a discussion of the issues which prompted the resignations with a Government representative. But Lansbury was not prepared to acquiesce in face-saving arrangements which, by removing any cause for complaint, obscured the fundamental principle at stake. Whitley's patronising attitude can only have exacerbated the situation. On learning of Lansbury's rejection of his offer, and of the Labour Leader's intention to make a statement concerning the matter to the delegates at the Party's Annual Conference, Whitley foolishly suggested the form which this statement should take. (120) At the Conference an emergency resolution was passed which pinpointed the two central issues raised by the affair:

The Conference protests against the deliberate exclusion of the Official Opposition from participating in the discussion and the failure to take the Opposition into consultation on a matter of political broadcasting. (121)

At a subsequent meeting of the Party's NEC Labour leaders were 'emphaticthat the party had not been fairly treated' in connection with the resignation broadcasts, and a further resolution was passed stating that

no political broadcast should be made on behalf of the Government without the Opposition being given an opportunity to broadcast. (122)

119. BBC, P.G., Lansbury to Whitley, 2 October 1932.

120. Ibid., Whitley to Lansbury, 4 October 1932.

121. IPAR 1932, p.228.

122. BBC, P.G., Lansbury to Whitley, 18 October 1932.

Two meetings between Lansbury and the Director General on 9 and 18 October did little to quell Lansbury's anger, and a Party deputation went to see Whitley on 25 October to reiterate their claim for full equality of treatment.(123) Whitley maintained that as the decision to confine the 'resignation series' to members of the Government was based on Parliamentary precedent, the question of inequality of treatment did not arise, since no such opportunity would be granted to the Opposition in the House of Commons on such an occasion.(124) For the Party however this was irrelevant. The Ministerial resignations were not a matter of significance only to the Government, as the broadcasts themselves indicated:

the reconstruction of a Government arising out of differences between Ministers on questions of high policy raises issues of national importance on which the Official Opposition has a legitimate claim to express its views. (125)

The BBC was not forthcoming however, and the National Joint Council of the TUC and the Labour Party established a Broadcasting Sub-Committee to draft a report on broadcasting policy, and resolved to put forward a motion for debate in the House of Commons on this matter.(126) During this debate, which took place on 22 February 1933, Cripps spoke forcefully on the subject of 'resignation' speeches, disputing the BBC's view that their policy was based on Parliamentary precedent. When a member of the Government resigns, he argued, he/she is allowed to explain their views, and no reply is made. If the Government is allowed by the BBC to reply to a resignation speech, then the principle of Parliamentary precedent does not apply. In which case, the principle of equality of treatment should apply, and the Official Opposition should be given the chance to broadcast in reply to Government statements.(127) Privately the Director of Talks had some sympathy with Cripps' view, and conceded that the resignation speeches were in effect Ministerial statements which not only attacked the Labour Party but gave the ex-Ministers concerned personal publicity.(128) The BBC was

- 123. TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 25 October 1932.
- 124. BBC, P.G., Whitley to Lansbury, 14 November 1932.
- 125. Ibid., National Joint Council to Whitley, 22 November 1932.
- 126. TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 22 November 1932.
- 127. Hansard, vol.274, col.1824, 22 February 1933.
- 128. BBC, P.G., Seipmann to Reith, 23 February 1933.

not prepared to concede so much in public however, and the rather fruitless negotiations in which the Parliamentary Labour Party had become engaged were broadened to encompass the whole question of Ministerial statements.

The issue was first raised in negotiations on the 25 October by the Labour deputation to Whitley. Lansbury stated that the Parliamentary Labour Party would insist upon claiming their right as the Official Opposition 'to broadcast in reply to whatever statements were put forward on behalf of the Government'.(129) In effect the failure of the BBC to consult Lansbury over the resignation speeches had created a new situation in which the 1930 agreement was no longer applicable. This had drawbacks for the Party, but it could also be used to the Party's advantage; and Lansbury was quick to exploit the opening which had been created. He demanded that Labour should be given the opportunity to reply to all Ministerial statements, including those which were supposed to be non-partisan and of an expository character, and especially the Budget and the Prime Minister's speech at the Lord Mayor's Banquet.(130) There had been fifteen such 'detached' speeches between 1 January and 25 October 1932, and on one occasion only had the Labour Party been given the opportunity to reply (the War Loan Conversion Scheme, on 14 July). While in many cases no political controversy arose from such detached statements, there were numerous important occasions, Lansbury argued, where partisan views were expressed. There was an issue of principle at stake. But in Lansbury's view the Corporation was guilty of 'deliberate bias', which had damaging political consequences for the Party, especially where Ministerial broadcasts on such controversial subjects as Disarmament and India were allowed without reply from the Official Opposition.(131) The Corporation conceded nothing, and the negotiations ground to a halt.

By this time the National Joint Council had assumed responsibility for broadcasting matters on behalf of the TUC General Council

129. TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 25 October 1932.
 130. BBC, P.G., Whitley to Lansbury, 14 November 1932.
 131. Ibid.; TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 22 November 1932.

and the Parliamentary Labour Party. It proceeded to initiate fresh negotiations on the allocation of talks during the next General Election, and drew up a statement of the Labour movement's broadcasting policy.(132) In June the NJC produced a memorandum on broadcasting which was discussed by a deputation to the Board of Governors on 11 July. The document reiterated Labour's views on Ministerial broadcasts and reaffirmed its demand for absolute equality of treatment. But it also included some additional points. Firstly, that no Government spokesman should be allowed to broadcast without adequate opportunity being given by the BBC for the presentation of the Official Opposition point of view. Secondly, that equality of opportunity should be extended to the trade union movement, in order that it can present its views on questions of economic, industrial or social interest.

The National Joint Council claims that where broadcast speeches are made by politicians, economists and employers on any topic affecting Trade Unionism, the spokesmen of this Movement should be entitled to submit its own point of view over the wireless. (133)

Thirdly, the NJC insisted that reasonable provision should be made for 'responsible working-class organisations' to initiate discussion when, in their view, matters of importance needed to be brought to the attention of the public. The immediate source of these fresh demands was the belief that the Government 'should not be allowed to use the BBC for propaganda'.(134) The deputation, in the words of the BBC's record of the meeting, believed the 'Government thought the wireless belonged to them' and that 'the Government were controlling us'.(135)

Following Whitley's assurances as to the Corporation's independence Whitley tried to end any further discussion of Ministerial statements by indicating that the BBC had no intention of granting the Official Opposition the right of reply on such occasions as the Lord Mayor's Banquet, the explanation of new Acts of Parliament, and expository talks concerning Government policy.(136) Nor could he accept

132. TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 23 May 1933.

133. 'Memorandum on Broadcasting', TUC 1933, pp.312-3.

134. BBC, P.G., 'Notes on a Meeting Held at Broadcasting House on July 11 1933'. (Hereafter, 'Notes, 11 July 1933')

135. Ibid.

136. See Reith's Diary entry for 11 July 1933, in C.Stuart (ed.), The Reith Diaries (London, 1975), p.112.

the right of Labour organisations to 'initiate on working-class problems' since the BBC could not 'hand over responsibility to any Party or group'. In response to A.G.Walkden's inquiry 'Would the BBC recognise the fifty-fifty principle on industrial questions?', the BBC Chairman replied that the past practice of the BBC showed that what they were asking was already being carried out. Lansbury did not agree, but could elicit no concessions from the Board.(137)

There remained the question of equality of treatment for Labour in regard to general series of party political talks. Between the 1931 General Election and July 1933 there had been one series of three talks between Lord Lloyd and Lord Cecil on the League of Nations and Collective Security, and one series of three talks on the War Loan Conversion Scheme, involving Baldwin, MacDonald and Lansbury. But there were only two proper party political talks series in this period. The first took place between October and December 1932, involving debates on Disarmament, National Taxation, Tariffs, and the Means Test. The second series took place between January and March 1933, involving debates on State Subsidies to Industry, the Abolition of Death Duties, Wage Rates in the Building Industry, Housing the Lower-Paid Worker, and Fascism. In the original agreement of November 1930 the allocation of such talks had been devised on the basis of electoral support, giving a ratio of Labour 9, Conservatives 8, and Liberals 5. But the formation of the National Government and the various Party splits made this method of allocating talks unworkable. The Corporation had little faith in the rota system anyway, and took the inability of the Party Whips to devise a satisfactory allocation of talks as justification for assuming responsibility for organising talks series without formal Party involvement.(138) Indeed, it was at the moment when the controversy over the resignation speeches erupted that the BBC invited Arthur Greenwood to participate in the first series of political talks for over a year, in a debate with R.S.Hudson on the Means Test.(139) The series was greeted with little enthusiasm by the Labour Party since it had been organised without the prior consultation of Labour leaders.(140) But it nevertheless gave the Party full equality of opportunity with the Government, which would not have been possible under the previous

137. BBC, P.G., 'Notes, 11 July 1933'.

138. Ibid., Whitley to Lansbury, 14 November 1932.

139. LPNEC, National Executive Committee Minutes, 30 September 1932. Greenwood declined the invitation.

140. TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 22 November 1932.

arrangements based on numbers of MPs in the House of Commons, given the diminutive size of the Labour Party in 1932. By mid-1933 however plans for a series of autumn talks were being drawn up by the Corporation which were not so advantageous to the Party. The Director of Talks, Siepmann, was told by Cripps that

the Official Opposition would not cooperate in any series other than on the basis of a right of reply by the Official Opposition to any of the other speakers put up by the Government side. (141)

Cripps eventually conceded that the NEC would probably agree to a ratio of 4:3, or 5:4 if the ILP was included. But in his official reply to Reith Lansbury insisted on full equality, either in the ratio 5:5 or 4:4.(142) The following day the deputation from the National Joint Council was told that the BBC had decided on a ratio of 5:3:1 for respectively the Government, the Labour Party and the Samuelite Liberals. Despite protests Whitley remained unmoved, and after reporting back the NJC accepted this arrangement 'under strong protest'.(143)

It is clear therefore that after almost a year of correspondence and intermittent negotiations the leaders of the Labour movement had failed to gain many of their objectives. In particular, no general principle of equality of access was established. Despite the absence of the BBC correspondence files concerning general political broadcasting during the period July 1933 - July 1937 it is evident from other BBC records and other sources that by the time of the 1935 General Election little had changed. Lansbury for example felt obliged to write to Reith in March 1935 that, in view of the recent practice of the Government in using the radio to broadcast statements on foreign policy, the Labour Party, as the Official Opposition, should be invited to broadcast its views on any such statement.(144) Reith's reply was that the issue of Ministerial statements had been dealt with in 1932

141. BBC, P.PPB., Siepmann to Reith, 23 June 1933.

142. Ibid., P.G., Lansbury to Reith, 10 July 1933.

143. Ibid., National Joint Council to Reith, 18 July 1933.

144. Ibid., P.MB., Lansbury to Reith, 27 March 1935.

and 1933; that such statements were factual and non-controversial; that Labour had no cause for complaint; and that the matter was closed.(145) Again, following the retirement of the Prime Minister from the Premiership on 7 June 1935, Baldwin's broadcast on Ministerial changes was regarded by Lansbury as nothing but political propaganda; and the Labour Leader complained that the Corporation had once again failed to invite the Official Opposition to reply.(146) Reith's line of defence was unchanged: the BBC retained the right to invite any Minister to broadcast on an occasion of particular national interest, without thereby incurring an obligation to provide facilities for the Official Opposition. (147)

Similarly, over the question of series of general political talks, full equality of treatment was still a live issue in 1935. In the case of the troublesome series on India for example, one which was not party political, including the views of independent experts, and one which took the form of a symposium, the allocation of talks to Party speakers was as follows: National Government 2, Conservatives opposed to Government policy 2, Liberals 2, Labour 1. There were, in addition, two specialists who had worked in the Indian Civil Service, and one 'independent'. On hearing of the distribution of the talks in this series Lansbury wrote to Reith that it was 'an impossible allocation', and requested an additional talk for Labour.(148) Reith replied that the series was not a party political one, but one which provided for Parties to express their views alongside those of others not identified with Party policies.(149) For Labour the allocation of four talks to the Conservatives and two to the Liberals was bizarre. As Attlee put it in a letter to Lansbury:

The allocation of places between rival groups within the Capitalist Government does not concern us. They are all our enemies. (150)

In this light Reith's suggestion that the Labour Party's view was just one of several different views on the subject had dangerous implications, since the focus of the debate would be the internal divisions of the

145. BBC., P.M.B., Reith to Lansbury, 29 March 1935.

146. Ibid., Lansbury to Reith, 17 June 1935.

147. Ibid., Reith to Lansbury, 27 June 1935.

148. BLPES, Lansbury Papers, vol.15, f120, Lansbury to Reith, 30 August 1934.

149. Ibid., vol.15, f121, Reith to Lansbury, 31 August 1934.

Conservative-dominated National Government, leaving the Labour Party, as Attlee realised, on the periphery of the controversy.(151)

The India series was a source of great frustration for the Labour Party. From the specific complaint made by the deputation to Whitley in 1933, that as the BBC regarded the Government as a coalition of Parties, though it was, in fact, one Party, it followed that there would always be a gross injustice in the allocation of talks, unless Labour had an equal number of talks to all Government speakers in combination. The complaint is evident in 1934 over the India series; and again in 1935. In its evidence to the Ullswater Committee in July 1935 the National Council of Labour (formerly the National Joint Council) felt compelled to insist that the 'Government should be considered as a single entity'.(152) The NCL took the view that the Official Opposition should be treated in line with Parliamentary procedure, whereby it had rights and privileges not accorded to other opposition Parties in the House. Following Parliamentary procedure the Government should be entitled to have the final word in a series of political talks, by way of a brief rejoinder. But it was vital, the NCL maintained, that the Official Opposition had the opportunity to put forward its case in reply to any Government broadcast, including factual, non-partisan, Ministerial talks. This was essential as

The public cannot come to a considered judgment on a complex and perhaps vital national issue unless it hears both sides of the case. (153)

Furthermore, in recognising that the initiative for Ministerial broadcasts resided with the Government, the NCL fully appreciated that the Labour Party's access to broadcasting was to some degree dependent upon Ministers themselves. It was conceivable that, in the event of the general principle of right of reply being accepted, Ministers might choose not to broach a particular issue with the public. The NCL

150. BLPES, Lansbury Papers, vol.28a, f204, Attlee to Lansbury, 4 September 1934.

151. Ibid.

152. 'National Council of Labour and Broadcasting Policy', LPAR 1935, p.306. (Hereafter, 'Broadcasting Policy'.)

153. Ibid., p.306.

therefore suggested to the Ullswater Committee that if the Official Opposition had

reasonable grounds for desiring the equivalent of a Vote of Censure on the Government of the day or to bring before the listening public some important aspect of the Government's policy....a certain provision of time should be made to meet cases of this kind. (154)

Overall therefore it is evident that by 1935 Labour objectives in regard to the principle of equality of access for purposes of political broadcasting had not been achieved. Nevertheless some important gains were made, due to the persistence of Labour pressure, the validity of their arguments, and the flexibility of the BBC on specific cases. In relation to Ministerial statements the BBC responded to Labour criticism by trying to minimise the likelihood of a repetition of the unpleasant situation which had arisen in October 1932. From early 1933 the Talks Department appears to have discouraged Ministers from broadcasting such statements, preferring permanent officials in the departments concerned to make them.(155) In regard to the specific request by Lansbury for the opportunity to participate in the 'resignation series', Whitley offered Lansbury a broadcast discussion with a Government representative on the issue which caused the resignation.(156) This was not quite what Lansbury wanted, and the offer was rejected. But this is clear evidence that concessions of a sort could be wrought from the Corporation. Similarly, when Lansbury complained that the Labour Party had not been invited to reply to the Prime Minister's talk on 'The Nation and the Unemployed' in December 1932, Reith initially was unsympathetic. But on being pressed further by Lansbury an invitation was extended, in the event that he found MacDonald's speech controversial.(157) In the case of Baldwin's broadcast on changes in his Cabinet in June 1935 Reith conceded afterwards that the new Prime Minister's talk justified a rejoinder from the Official Opposition, and an invitation was extended to Lansbury to participate in a series of three talks on the issue in question.(158) An additional Labour talk was granted in the Indian

154. 'Broadcasting Policy', LPAR 1935, p.306.

155. BBC, P.G., Siepmann to Reith, 23 February 1933.

156. Ibid., Whitley to Lansbury, 4 October 1932.

157. TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 20 December 1932; BBC, P.G., Siepmann to Reith, 20 February 1933.

158. BBC, P.MB., Reith to Lansbury, 27 June 1935.

series after several representations to Reith.(159) Finally, agreement was reached in 1934 over the Budget. The detached Ministerial statement enjoyed by all Chancellors since Churchill in 1928 was replaced by a series of political talks in which replies to the Chancellor's talk were made by both Labour and Liberal Opposition Parties. Proposals along these lines had been rejected by Neville Chamberlain in 1933, just as Snowden had done in 1930, and on the same grounds. But in the case of Chamberlain's veto Lansbury was convinced that the decision was simply a manoeuvre to deny the Labour Party the chance to comment on the Budget.(160)

These were small gains compared with the larger issues which remained unresolved for Labour, and they were evidently appreciated by frustrated Labour politicians. But Lansbury and his colleagues insisted, in virtually every case where some concession had been made, that acceptance of the modified arrangements did not prejudice, by setting a precedent, future negotiations on the general principle of equality of access.(161) Moreover, acceptance did not imply gratitude; and Labour's fundamental sense of grievance remained undiminished. Indeed, it was constantly fuelled by the BBC's attitude, and in particular by the Corporation's attempts to assume greater control over political broadcasting.

As already indicated, the Corporation decided in September 1932 to take matters into its own hands regarding political talks in view of the inability of the three Parties to arrange them. A Parliamentary Advisory Panel was established to advise the Corporation on the question of political broadcasting and liaise with the Parties. Its members were present in an unofficial capacity, but with the approval of the Conservative and Liberal Parties. Labour's objection to the PAP was conditioned by several factors. Whitley's attitude towards Lansbury did not ease the situation. But it was the unfortunate coincidence of the launching of the Panel with the controversy over the resignation of Snowden and Samuel which predisposed Labour politicians to regard it unfavourably. In drawing up proposals for the

159. BLPES, Lansbury Papers, vol.15, f137, Green (for Siepmann) to Lansbury, 15 November 1934.

160. Hansard, vol.280, col.2299, 24 July 1933.

161. See for example, BBC, P.G., Lansbury to Reith, 10 July 1933.

Corporation's first series of party political talks in over a year, the 'resignation' talks were automatically identified with the PAP. Lansbury expressed surprise to Whitley that the BBC had not consulted the Party Leaders before proceeding with the proposals, and that the BBC 'has apparently itself selected the subjects for discussion and the speakers'.(162) The selection of the issues put before the public was, Lansbury argued, a matter of vital importance, and there was a danger that in exercising this power of selection the authority responsible could overlook those questions to which the Official Opposition wished to draw the attention of the public. It was essential therefore that political broadcasting should be under the broad control of the Parties; and that the BBC should consult with the Party Leaders concerning speakers for such talks. Whitley tried to reassure Lansbury that strict propriety in the selection of both issues and speakers would be maintained by recourse to the Panel.(163) Lansbury had initially approved of the PAP, and James Milner's membership of it as Labour representative. But it appears that Lansbury was given to believe that the BBC was not planning any political series before April 1933. On hearing, without prior consultation, that a series was being arranged for the autumn, and that Arthur Greenwood had been invited to participate, Lansbury was furious. Arising as it did when Lansbury was in dispute with Whitley over the 'resignation series' it appeared as yet more evidence of the BBC's shoddy treatment of the Labour Party.(164) Whitley's justification for the course of action taken, 'the Corporation's greater knowledge of the suitability of subjects and speakers',(165) was patronising and inept, and provoked Lansbury:

I am astonished that the BBC should consider that it has a greater knowledge of the suitability of subjects and speakers than the Leaders of the Parliamentary Parties. This is an extraordinary claim. It implies that the BBC, controlling the greatest publicity service in the country, is to judge what ought to be the political issues discussed and is further to select what politicians it pleases to represent organised political opinion....I regret that I cannot share your view that listeners can trust the BBC to hold the balance fairly. (166)

162. BLPES, Lansbury Papers, vol.10, f277-9, Lansbury to Whitley, 27 September 1932.
163. BBC, P.G., Whitley to Lansbury, 30 September 1932.
164. Ibid., Lansbury to Whitley, 2 October 1932.
165. Ibid., Whitley to Lansbury, 30 September 1932.
166. Ibid., Lansbury to Whitley, 2 October 1932.

Arthur Greenwood immediately declined the offer, Milner was advised by the Party's NEC not to serve on the PAP, and the NEC formally expressed their hostility to the idea of 'unofficial political broadcasts under the auspices of an unofficial advisory committee'.(167) The deputation to Whitley on the 25 October, fearing that the BBC might distance itself further from the political Parties and invite independent commentators to talk on Party issues, insisted that the views of the Labour Party should only be broadcast by its official representatives. The following day the NEC resolved that prior to any broadcast by a member of the Parliamentary Labour Party on matters of Party policy, approval was required from the Policy Sub-Committee, effectively preventing any Labour politician from participating in series of political broadcasts arranged through the PAP.(168)

The main issue of course was the responsibility for deciding upon which subjects political talks were to be broadcast. Whitley vigorously advocated the Corporation's ultimate control;(169) and Lansbury and the National Joint Council equally forcefully insisted that

the choice of subjects by the BBC without prior consultation with the Leaders of the political Parties places in the hands of the Corporation the power to determine the electoral issues on which the public are to be invited to make up their minds. Such a power is one which no medium for disseminating news and opinions ought to enjoy. (170)

The existence of the Advisory Panel, far from alleviating the suspicions and ill-feeling amongst Labour politicians, served to exacerbate the situation. The Party decided to ignore it completely since it 'would be responsible to no-one'; but also because in participating in the BBC's arrangements for political talks it implicitly accepted the BBC's narrow conception of legitimate political subjects.(171) Reith had

167. LPNEC, National Executive Committee Minutes, 30 September 1932; BBC, Policy. Political Broadcasting. Parliamentary Advisory Panel., Milner to Reith, 6 December 1932; ibid., P.G., Lansbury to Reith, 18 October 1932. (Hereafter, 'P.PAP'.)
168. TUC GC, National Joint Council Minutes, 25 October 1932; LPNEC, National Executive Committee Minutes, 26 October 1932.
169. BBC, P.G., Whitley to Lansbury, 14 November 1932.
170. Ibid., National Joint Council to Whitley, 22 November 1932.
171. Ibid., Lansbury to Reith, 22 December 1932.

proposed a non-political series of talks on 'Housing' and the PAP was in the process of drawing up plans for it when Lansbury discovered what was intended. He argued that the Corporation regarded many subjects as 'non-political' which, from the Party's point of view, had political facets which ought not to be overlooked. He suggested that in accepting the BBC's definition of 'political' the Panel was not merely consolidating the Corporation's control over the range of political issues brought before the public, but contributing to the narrowing of politics within certain limits, and thereby denying Labour the opportunity to express its views on issues which it considered to be politically important.(172)

In practice the Panel proved to be of little value. It rarely met due to pressure of parliamentary business, and, as Roger Eckersley, Controller (Programmes) admitted in late 1934, it was not representative since there was no Labour member.(173) By June 1935 it was virtually moribund, and attempts by Reith to reconstitute it and give the Panel greater status vis-à-vis the Parties failed.(174) The collapse of the Panel was due in no small measure to the persistent lobbying of Lansbury and Attlee. Reith had been persuaded to allow the Parties to choose their own subjects and speakers in the autumn series of political talks in 1933 following Lansbury's insistence.(175) The precedent set here rendered the PAP redundant, and thereafter its role was insignificant.

This then was a major success for the Party. But the question of ultimate responsibility for deciding the subjects upon which political broadcasts were to be made remained. It was a question for which there appeared to be no obvious solution, since the positions of the BBC and the Labour Party were mutually exclusive. As the BBC had the advantage, this particular issue remained a source of resentment within the Labour leadership. In their evidence to the Ullswater Committee Sir Walter Citrine and Arthur Greenwood raised the question of the machinery needed for arranging political broadcasts. The problems, they argued, were to satisfy the needs of the Parties and avoid placing the BBC in the embarrassing position of determining either issues or speakers. If there was to be political broadcasting, it had to be the responsibility

172. BBC, P.G., Lansbury to Reith, 22 December 1932. The 'Housing' series eventually became 'political'.
173. Ibid., P.PAP., Eckersley to Reith, 19 November 1934.
174. Ibid., Eckersley to Weston (Post Office), 18 June 1935.

of the Party Leaders and their advisers to arrange it, otherwise the BBC could become 'the arbiter of political fortunes'.(176)

The resentment and frustration arising from these developments were not eased by the occasional access to the microphone granted to Labour leaders in connection with political or 'semi-political' talks of a non-party character concerning broad subjects of topical interest. Sir Walter Citrine for example took part in a debate with Professor John Hilton on the subject of 'Are Trade Union Restrictions Justifiable?'. Attlee gave three talks on 'Departments of State at Work'; and Herbert Morrison contributed to a series on 'Freedom', and a short talk on 'The LCC Town Planning Scheme'. But such talks were infrequent; and it is difficult to judge from the surviving BBC files and the Radio Times the degree of balance in such talks and debates since on many occasions Labour or Conservative speakers were not present in their capacity as Labour or Conservative MPs, but as specialists in their chosen fields. It is however evident that such general political broadcasting evoked little criticism from Labour ranks; and correspondence from contributors in these files conveys nothing of the bitterness apparent in Lansbury's exchanges with Whitley and Reith. Nor does it suggest great concern with any possible imbalance or advantage conferred upon Labour's political opponents (although there is occasionally some disappointment expressed that the discussion proposed did not cover certain aspects of the subject).

In one particular aspect of general political broadcasting Labour enjoyed regular and equitable access: the weekly series 'The Week in Westminster'. The objective of the series was to give an impartial account by an eye-witness of proceedings in the House of Commons, conveying both the substance of the debates and the atmosphere of party politics. Labour politicians and prominent Labour personalities regularly broadcast on a rota basis with representatives of the other Parties, enjoying an unproblematic parity with Government speakers. Attlee was regarded as a particular success and bore the

175. BBC, P.G., Lansbury to Reith, 10 July 1933.

176. 'Broadcasting Policy', LPAR 1935, p.306.

burden of the majority of Labour talks in the series in the early 1930's. The experience was invaluable, but the exercise was regarded as unsatisfactory and senior Labour politicians gradually became disinclined to take part.(177) In their evidence to Ullswater Citrine and Greenwood suggested that it was not possible to be strictly impartial in these talks and it would be better to abandon them: if proper provision were made for the Party Leaders to appear before the microphone then such talks would be unnecessary.(178)

As the General Election of 1935 approached, and nothing of significance had been achieved on the question of equal access, the Party began to pin its hopes on the official inquiry into broadcasting, and the outcome of the Election itself. For with a rejuvenated Official Opposition numerically restored to its pre-1931 size, the case for fairer treatment would be more difficult to resist on the basis of the BBC's previous policy in allocating broadcasts. The distribution of talks for the General Election therefore acquired an additional significance.

Wishing to avoid becoming involved in the wrangling over the allocation of talks for the General Election, Alan Dawnay, Controller (Programmes), had already informed the Government Chief Whip Margesson in June 1935 that the responsibility of the Corporation in connection with the Election consisted solely in providing time in the programme schedule for Election speeches. The question of allocating this time between the Parties was one which was best dealt with by a committee of the three Whips, chaired by the Speaker.(179) The time to be made available was a 20-minute slot at 9-40 p.m. each evening for four days, for each of the three weeks covering the Election period - twelve broadcasts in all. The BBC's Control Board suggested that an allocation in the ratio of 7:5 in favour of the Government as against both Opposition Parties could be the basis for negotiations; and it reluctantly accepted that minority political Parties such as the Independent Labour Party and the Communist Party might have to be

177. BBC, Talks. Current Affairs. Week in Westminster., Wace to Siepmann, 11 July 1934.

178. 'Broadcasting Policy', LPAR 1935, p.307.

179. BBC, P.GE., 'Record of an interview between Dawnay and Captain Margesson', 28 June 1935.

included in the arrangements.(180) In view of the Speaker's reluctance to assume responsibility for making these arrangements Margesson suggested to Graves, Dawnay's successor, that the Government would accept a ratio of Government 5, Labour 4, and Liberal 3. Only those Parties with a realistic chance of forming a Government should be included in the main Election broadcast series. Minority Parties, if granted access, should broadcast at some other, less favourable time, such as 6-00 p.m., and for a shorter period.(181) Margesson agreed to consult the other Whips on this basis, and on hearing that arrangements were being made Attlee immediately put forward his own proposals to Reith. Instead of the 5:4:3 ratio he suggested 5:5:2 would be more appropriate since the Conservatives and the Labour Party were the only two real contestants for power. Moreover, as there was already a large number of Liberals in the Government, and the Samuelite Liberals had been elected as supporters of the present Government, Liberal opinion would be adequately represented by two speeches; and as the total number of candidates mustered by all the Liberal groups would not exceed 100, three broadcasts would be disproportionate to their size and influence.(182) With regard to minority Parties Attlee had, as Deputy Leader, demonstrated his willingness to dismiss their claims to use the microphone, contrary to official Party policy.(183) As Leader of the Party he was unwilling to take responsibility for denying their claims, probably because the political damage which the ILP could inflict was considerable at a point when Party unity, above all, was critical, bearing in mind the catastrophic consequences of disunity prior to the last election. He therefore left it to the discretion of the Corporation to resolve this minor but sticky question.

In addition, Attlee suggested that all Election broadcasts should cease three days before the poll to prevent the Government, which would make the final speech, from gaining an unfair advantage by introducing a surprise issue into the contest to which Labour would have no opportunity of reply. Derived from the bitter experience of

180. BBC, P.GE., Control Board, 'Notes on the Allocation of Election Broadcasting', 15 October 1935.
181. Ibid., Record of an interview between C.Graves, Sir Stephen Tallents and Captain Margesson, 15 October 1935, 16 October 1935.
182. Ibid., Attlee to Reith, 17 October 1935.
183. Daily Herald, 14 November 1933.

1931, when Walter Runciman precipitated a Post Office Savings Bank 'scare' three days before polling day, this was a precaution against 'stunt tactics', fear of which loomed large in Attlee's thinking.(184) Again, with reference to the events of the previous Election campaign, Attlee urged in his letter to Reith that during the period of the General Election all other talks which had any degree of political content should be avoided. Furthermore, he requested that on the final night of the broadcast series, both the Official Opposition and the Government should speak, with neither Party seeing the script of their opponent. Lastly, he urged 'close scrutiny of news bulletins' to avoid any 'tendenciousness' on the part of BBC announcers.(185)

The Corporation complied with Attlee's requests regarding the scrutiny of news bulletins and the avoidance of any other political talks during the Election period.(186) With regard to the minority Parties the BBC decided to grant access to any Party which fielded a certain number of candidates, the criterion of 20 not being made public until after nomination day.(187) As none of these Parties put forward 20 candidates they were denied the opportunity to broadcast. Attlee's suggestion that Election broadcasting should cease a few days before the poll, was accepted; although the request for Labour and Conservative speakers to broadcast on the final evening of the series was rejected as impractical. On the central question of the allocation of talks, Graves indicated that the Liberals wanted an additional talk but had accepted the original proposal of three, and that Margesson had threatened to demand at least one more talk if Labour was granted an additional one.(188) Attlee accepted the 5:4:3 arrangement 'under protest', but was presumably grateful that the ILP had not been included in the calculations, since the Liberals had in effect only two talks, Margesson having insisted that if Lloyd George was to broadcast, which he did, he must take one of the Liberal allocation.(189) Finally, Attlee, mindful of the tendency of the

184. Daily Herald, 2 November 1935.

185. BBC, P.GE., Attlee to Reith, 17 October 1935.

186. Ibid., G.Murray to Chief News Editor, 21 October 1935; Murray to Regional Directors, 25 October 1935; Board of Governors Minutes, 8 November 1935.

187. Ibid., Graves to Attlee, 22 October 1935.

188. Ibid.

Corporation to omit the proper title of the Labour Party, reminded Graves that the Party was not to be designated the 'Labour Opposition' but the 'Official Opposition'.(190)

Before the negotiations over General Election broadcasting began the National Council of Labour issued a circular to Trades Councils and Divisional Labour Parties emphasising the importance of the Daily Herald in the approaching Election. It reveals the Party's expectations regarding the likely allocation of talks:

The use of the wireless will be a potent element in the contest whenever it may come, and, while the Labour Party will claim a full opportunity to broadcast its policy, it is more than likely that the Government, on the strength of its claim to represent several Parties, will again secure a preponderating proportion of the facilities afforded by the BBC. (191)

In this context the final arrangements for the Election were a significant advance for the Labour Party. Similarly, in its evidence to the Ullswater Committee, the NCL was

emphatically of the opinion that during the election campaign the proportion of speakers allocated to each Party should broadly represent their strength in the country... (192)

This submission signified a considerable shift in the Party's thinking since 1932 and helps explain the remarkable ease and speed with which an arrangement was made in October 1935. It also demonstrates the confidence of the Party's leadership that in the event of an Election it would be largely restored to its pre-1931 size in the House of Commons. But it further suggests the degree of success for Labour leaders in so far as the 1935 Election broadcast allocation did not 'broadly represent' the Party's strength in the country. On the day prior to the dissolution of Parliament the Parliamentary Labour Party

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189. BBC, P.GE., Attlee to Graves, 23 October 1935; Record of an interview between C.Graves, Sir Stephen Tallents and Captain Margesson, 15 October 1935, 16 October 1935. Lord Snowden eventually secured a similar arrangement, reducing the Liberal quota of talks to one.
190. Ibid., Attlee to Graves, 23 October 1935.
191. LPNEC, National Council of Labour circular, 'The General Election and the Daily Herald', February 1935.
192. LPAR 1935, p.306.

consisted of 57 MPs; the National Government had 506, of which 449 were Conservatives. If the size of the vote rather than the number of MPs is taken as the measure of the Party's strength in the country, then in 1931 the Labour vote of 6.65 million was less than half that for the National Government (14.5 million), and only just over half that for the Conservatives (11.98 million). There is no fully satisfactory way of indicating the strength of the Labour Party in the country, bye-elections providing at best a guide to the likely degree of change in political fortunes at the next election if the voting population votes along similar lines. As the NCL did not specify the means by which this strength was to be gauged, it could suggest that the practice adopted by the Whips in 1930, of allocating talks according to numbers in the House of Commons, was the method to be used, (accepting that in 1931 an extraordinary set of circumstances emerged which could not be used as a precedent under normal political conditions). If that was so, then the allocation agreed upon in October 1935 bore no relation to the relative strength of the three Parties, and marks a substantial advance in the Labour Party's quest for fair treatment in regard to political broadcasting. Even if the method to be used was based on the size of the vote in the previous election, the 2:1 advantage for the National Government did not materialise in the allocations agreed in 1935, which would again represent a notable improvement in the position of the Labour Party.

As before, Labour speakers during the Election were uninspiring, their microphone technique, with the notable exception of Herbert Morrison, rather primitive compared with their political opponents. For Harold Laski the Party's use of the radio was 'incomparably inferior' to that of the Conservatives.(193) Morrison however, with the assistance of Mary Hamilton, had arranged for the BBC Talks Department to coach him in the techniques of broadcasting.(194) The result prompted Thomas Jones to refer to 'the excellence' of Morrison's talk.(195)

193. H.Laski, 'The General Election of 1935', Political Quarterly, January-March 1936, p.7.

194. M.A.Hamilton, Remembering My Good Friends (London, 1944), p.168.

195. T.Jones to Abraham Flexner, 17 November 1935, in T.Jones, A Diary with Letters 1931 - 1950 (London, 1950), p.156. See also Manchester Guardian, 9 November 1935.

Improvements there may have been, and they were not, from Labour's point of view, inconsiderable; but the scars of earlier disputes with the BBC remained and continued to colour the Party's conception of the Corporation. While in general terms Party leaders were prepared to give Reith and his colleagues the benefit of the doubt, there were occasions where an institutional bias in favour of the Government of the day was the most generous construction which could be placed upon Corporation policy. Writing in January 1936, shortly after relinquishing the Leadership of the Party, Lansbury expressed with some bitterness a view which was representative of the state of opinion within the Party:

the BBC under your guidance, or at least with your acquiescence has never, from the first days when the Labour Party was driven from Office in 1931, received fair play from the BBC (sic). Since I gave up the leadership my friend Major Attlee has been subject to the same kind of treatment.
The BBC...has been, and apparently still is to be, grossly partisan....It is the political outlook of the department I am calling in question. (196)

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Between 1936 and 1939 there were few developments in political broadcasting in connection with party political talks. Talks policy in general became more adventurous. Talks programmes were wider in scope, more imaginative in style, and much more accessible to what Nigel Luker of the Talks Department described as 'The not so intelligent and mostly uninformed' - the largest section of the Corporation's potential audience.(197) But political broadcasting languished, a casualty of the fundamental commitment of the BBC to the principle of 'balance', and of its dependence upon agreement amongst the three main political Parties before any partisan political broadcast talks, discussions or debates were arranged. The wrangling of which the

196. BLPES, Lansbury Papers, vol.16, f3-5, Lansbury to Reith, 8 January 1936. That such an opinion was typical is clear from the views expressed on the BBC by Labour MPs during the three debates on the Corporation in the House of Commons in 1936 following the publication of the Ullswater Report.
197. BBC, Talks. Talks Policy., N.Luker to Assistant Director of Talks, 25 November 1938. (Hereafter, 'T.TP.')

Parties had proved themselves eminently capable prior to 1936 disinclined Reith and his colleagues to become involved in further futile negotiations. But the Ullswater Report had recommended that on the major political issues of the day there should be 'close cooperation and consultation' with the three main Parties.(198) It was with a discernible lack of enthusiasm that a fresh approach was made in mid-1936; and by the end of 1938 no progress had been made.

There were therefore surprisingly few political broadcasts falling along Party lines after the 1935 General Election. There were many debates and discussions on controversial subjects, but the participants were recruited for their expertise on the matters in question and not their membership of a particular Party or organisation.(199) Yet even here there appears to have been, up to the end of 1937 at least, a decline in this type of programme, as Herbert Morrison's complaint suggests:

I think it is unfortunate that there has been a tendency in recent years for the proportion of controversial broadcasts to decrease. I hope nobody has got cold feet! (200)

In fact, there was a marked absence from the airwaves of politicians for any type of broadcast, up to 1938. As Sir Cecil Graves, Controller (Programmes) revealed, apart from the weekly series 'The Week in Westminster', 'broadcasts by MPs are entirely sporadic'.(201) The only live political occasions regularly involving MPs as representatives of their Parties were the General Election and the Budget. Occasionally Ministers broadcast short factual statements about Acts of Parliament for which they were responsible, usually after the 10-00 p.m. News Bulletin. Otherwise, MPs appeared only as specialists rather than as MPs, and did not represent a Party or a partisan point of view.(202) This method of presenting controversial discussion was to enable 'recognised authorities' to supply the listening public 'with as adequate

198. Cmd. 5091 (1936) Report of the Broadcasting Committee, para.92.

199. BBC, P.G., Graves to Miss Stanley, 29 June 1937.

200. Ibid., Contributors. Herbert Morrison., Morrison to Reith, 15 October 1937. (Hereafter, 'C.H.M.')

201. Ibid., P.G., Graves to Miss Stanley, 29 June 1937.

202. Ibid.

material as possible for forming their own opinion'.(203) This method, which, between the General Election of 1935 and February 1939 was the principal method of presenting political discussion over the airwaves (the Budget apart), was intended to provide an impartial presentation, to inform rather than persuade. It was essentially a form of broadcasting designed to satisfy the philosophical commitment to a broad educational function, and the obligations of the Corporation following the recommendations of the Crawford and Ullswater Reports, rather than to meet the political needs of the parliamentary Parties. Attempts to devise new approaches to political broadcasting had very mixed results, partly due to the difficulties involved in getting the Parties to agree, and partly due to the curious circumstances arising at the time. On making a decision in April 1938 to take the initiative and not leave it to the Parties to agree before taking further action, (204) the Corporation found itself with no issues of domestic political controversy worthy of treatment: the most attractive issue was the Milk Bill.(205) Searching for a 'live political issue' the Director of Talks, Sir Richard Maconachie, eventually suggested a political discussion on the 'freedom of the press';(206) but within a few weeks this question became the focus of heated argument in the House of Commons. The issue was very much 'live'; in fact it was 'too hot' for Maconachie to risk, and the idea had to be abandoned.(207) In consequence, despite their good intentions, BBC staff were helpless, waiting 'until some controversial measure comes before the House'.(208) The irony was that issues of foreign policy were drawing great public interest, but the Corporation felt unable to cover them in any way other than its standard method of impartial experts giving an authoritative exposition: foreign affairs were not to be the subject of broadcast partisan discussion, as the BBC had found to its cost over the planned series, the 'Citizen and His Government'.(209) The Corporation was in the invidious position

203. BBC, P.G., Memorandum to the Talks Advisory Committee, 'Live Political Issues', 7 July 1938.
204. Ibid., Nicolls to Maconachie, 6 April 1938. Nicolls replaced Graves as Controller (Programmes).
205. Ibid., Maconachie to Nicolls, 25 April 1938.
206. Ibid., Maconachie to Margesson (Government Chief Whip), 18 May 1938.
207. Ibid., T.TP., Maconachie to Nicolls, 29 June 1938.
208. Ibid., P.G., Nicolls to Moberley (Chairman, Talks Advisory Committee) 9 May 1938.
209. There is a full file on this series, which reveals clearly the pressure exerted by the Foreign Office in persuading the BBC

of having to deny requests for facilities to talk on Anthony Eden's resignation, and issues such as rearmament, yet offering the Parties the opportunity to get their teeth into the Bacon Industry Bill.

By April 1939 therefore only two broadcast debates had taken place involving all three Parties on subjects of current controversy, 'Old Age Pensions' and 'Municipal Trading'. This was, as R.C. Norman, Chairman of the Board of Governors, put it in a letter to the Postmaster General, 'after years of effort on our part'. (210) Conveying a strong note of resentment he complained that

the vast audience....are deprived of the opportunity of getting, through the unrivalled instrument which we control, such an education in the most vital controversial questions... (211)

It was not through lack of effort on the part of the Corporation that this state of affairs had arisen. The original Parliamentary Advisory Panel set up in 1933 had by 1935 lost any usefulness it may have had, and was finally dissolved in October of that year, at the time of the General Election. In May 1936, acting in accordance with the recommendations of the Ullswater Report, Reith revived the idea of a Parliamentary Advisory Committee 'to advise us on all political broadcasts'. (212) Following previous procedure the Speaker was approached to nominate a Committee. The Speaker agreed on condition that all three Party Leaders made a formal request for him to do so. However, the Speaker was not prepared to act until the reassembly of Parliament in the autumn, by which time the Corporation had decided to wait anyway until February 1937, when the new Charter and Licence had come into effect. The subsequent preoccupation of the House with preparations for the Coronation made the Speaker reluctant to go ahead, since no request from the Party Leaders was forthcoming. In frustration Norman appealed to the PMG to suggest a way forward. (213) No reply was received

to abandon its plans. See BBC, Talks. The Citizen and His Government, 1935-6. For a brief account, see A. Briggs, Governing the BBC, (London, 1979), pp. 198-201.

210. BBC, P.G., Norman to G.C. Tryon, 5 April 1939.

211. Ibid.

212. Ibid., Policy. Parliamentary Advisory Committee., Reith to ?Carpendale, 18 May 1936. (Hereafter, 'P.PAC.')

213. Ibid., Norman to Tryon, 1 March 1937.

until almost twelve months later, when Tryon suggested there was nothing which he could do to overcome the problem.(214)

Maconachie, the Director of Talks, drew the obvious conclusion: there was not going to be a Parliamentary Advisory Committee, and the BBC would have to work out its own scheme for political broadcasting, taking special precautions to pre-empt criticism of unfair treatment from the Parties.(215) Plans were eventually drawn up based on the principles that there should be an increase in the amount of political broadcasting within the Programme Schedule, and that it should focus on 'live political issues' - that is, subjects of current interest in the House of Commons.(216) The scheme involved a series of talks along the lines of the Budget talks, in which each Party would make a statement, the talks to run consecutively for 10 minutes each, (Category A). It was assumed that Front Bench politicians would participate. Secondly, there would be the more usual method of treatment, discussion by recognised authorities in an impartial manner, where no Party considerations arose. Category B talks would take place on a monthly basis. Thirdly, the practice of News Talks would continue. These were usually Ministerial statements, or factual descriptions, and were not connected with subjects of controversy, (Category C). The possibility of providing a slot each week in the Schedule to be used as the Parties saw fit was rejected on grounds of bad programming practice.(217)

The scheme was approved by the Board of Governors, and a fresh approach to the Party Whips was authorised in order to arrange a series of Category A talks.(218) Negotiations went slowly however, and in October 1938 Margesson contacted Nicolls suggesting that the Government would prefer to postpone further discussion until the new year, by which time the international situation might have improved.(219) It was only during the first week of 1939 therefore that agreement between Attlee and Margesson was reached; and plans were immediately

214. BBC, P.PAC., Tryon to Norman, 18 February 1938.

215. Ibid., P.G., Maconachie to Graves, 7 March 1938. See also ibid., Tallents to Reith, 15 March 1938.

216. Ibid., Nicolls to Maconachie, 6 April 1938.

217. Ibid., Nicolls to Graves, 30 May 1938.

218. Ibid., Miss Stanley to Tallents, 9 June 1938; ibid., T.TP., Assistant Director of Talks to Maconachie, 15 June 1938.

219. Ibid., P.G., Margesson to Nicolls, 28 October 1938.

put into effect to begin a Category A series the following month.(220) Apart from providing a regular time in the Schedule, no other control over the series was exercised by the BBC. Scripts were not seen in advance, the subjects were decided by the Parties on a rota basis and were on live political issues, and each Party chose its own speakers, who were back-benchers. There was however a promise that the scheme would not include foreign affairs or 'personal subjects' (that is, differences of opinion between members of the same Party) in the House of Commons.(221) The format was for each Party to broadcast for 14 minutes in succession, each from a different studio. They were therefore unable to gain an advantage because there was no way of replying directly to specific points made in the previous broadcast. The result was apparently less of a discussion and more a succession of speakers reading prepared statements in a rather heavy style.(222) Attlee suggested that some life could be given to the talks if, at the end, an informal discussion between the speakers was introduced, allowing for the direct exchange of argument and counter-argument. But the Party Whips could not agree on this proposal and the original format was retained.(223) Between February and the end of the Parliamentary Session there were six monthly broadcasts. The subjects were: 'Old Age Pensions' (chosen by the Labour Party), 'Municipal Trading' (the Government), 'Unemployment' (the Liberals), 'Palestine' (the Government), 'An Emergency Tax on Wealth' (Labour), and 'Agriculture' (the Government).

One of the reasons for the 'success' in securing further political broadcasts for the Parties was the constant pressure of Megan Lloyd George on the Talks Advisory Committee. But it was the demands

220. BBC, P.G., Nicolls to Maconachie, 9 January 1939. Unfortunately no details of the negotiations between Attlee and Margesson have survived in BBC records.
221. Ibid., Ogilvie to the Labour Party, 9 February 1939. These two conditions were probably at the insistence of the Government, not the BBC.
222. 'Debates that lack debate', Cooperative News, 27 May 1939.
223. BBC, Talks. Political Broadcasting. Political Debates, 1939., Attlee to Nicolls, 4 May 1939; C.Edwards (Labour Chief Whip) to Nicolls, 11 May 1939.

of the Labour Party for opportunities to broadcast on issues of national importance which finally persuaded the Board of Governors that the Corporation must take the initiative and devise its own schemes. With the PMG's long awaited reply in February 1938 that he could do nothing to help the Corporation, the initial reaction within the BBC to the idea of assuming responsibility for organising political broadcasts was lukewarm. Maconachie for example thought it would be more trouble than it was worth.(224) But a deputation of the Labour Party to the BBC on the 30 March convinced the Board that it was both desirable and necessary that there should be more (i.e., some) political broadcasts.(225)

The Labour Party had already put forward its views on political broadcasting in its submission to the Ullswater Committee. Citrine and Greenwood had argued that political debates should be a normal feature of broadcast programmes. They accepted that such debates should not be the sole preserve of the Parties, but that neither should they be the sole preserve of the impartial specialists. In addition, there should be frequent broadcast talks on political questions, in which the Government would be entitled to explain and defend its policies, the Official Opposition's view would be entitled to be heard, and the Government would be entitled to a brief rejoinder at the end of the series. Moreover, machinery should be set up for the Parties to make the necessary arrangements. The role of the BBC should simply be to provide the programme time and the technical facilities: it was not within the province of the Corporation to determine the subjects of such broadcasts, or the speakers.(226)

With negotiations over the Parliamentary Advisory Committee postponed between May 1936 and February 1937, and then held in abeyance until February 1938, it is not surprising that the Labour Party grew increasingly impatient. The Government could use Ministerial statements to promote its policies and gain publicity, while Labour had no opportunity

224. BBC, P.G., Maconachie to Graves, 7 March 1938.

225. Ibid., Nicolls, 'Political Broadcasts', Memorandum, 3 June 1938, p.1.

226. 'Broadcasting Policy', LPAR 1935, p.306.

to put its views across: it had not appeared before the microphone since the General Election of 1935, with the exception of the Budget talks. Herbert Morrison believed that the Corporation's reliance on the impartial expert as a way of fulfilling its obligations to provide political broadcasts was misguided:

a pair of talks by two effective party speakers (whoever they may be) are likely to do the job much better than an educational lecture. (227)

Eventually the Party's NEC resolved to see the Director General

with a view to an equitable apportionment between the Government and the Official Opposition being arranged. (228)

In order to give a sharper edge to Labour's claims to fairer treatment J.S. Middleton, the Party Secretary, made a request for Labour to be given facilities to broadcast on the international situation, in view of the new development in Government policy.(229) The request was in effect an intimation that the Labour Party wished to give its views on the events which had precipitated Eden's resignation as Foreign Secretary. But it appears to have been more specifically a device to bring the whole question of access to broadcasting facilities into the open; and in this respect the tactic was successful. Following the deputation to the Board of Governors on 30 March the Corporation was in no doubt that the Labour Party wanted party political broadcasting to be established on a regular basis.(230) In the absence of any further progress, and following Ogilvie's decision to suspend negotiations until the international situation improved, Attlee felt the matter sufficiently urgent to request a meeting with the new Director General. At the meeting Greenwood argued that, accepting that the Government of the day was 'bound to get a larger showing', Labour should have had some opportunities for broadcasting its views. (231) The deputation agreed to see Margesson, the Government Chief Whip, in order to revive negotiations and speed things up.(232) Within five weeks agreement was reached, and a new departure in British broadcasting was initiated, due in no small measure to the attempts by the Labour Party to gain access to the airwaves.

227. BBC, C.H.M., Morrison to Reith, 15 October 1937.

228. LPNEC, National Executive Committee Minutes, 15 February 1938.

229. BBC, P.G., Middleton to Reith, 24 February 1938.

230. Ibid., Nicolls to Reith, 30 May 1938.

The new series of Category A talks did not however diminish the overall advantage enjoyed by the Government through its far greater access to the radio. The issue had become sufficiently sensitive by early 1937 for the Corporation to circulate instructions that no Cabinet Minister or holder of high office should be approached to give a talk or make a Ministerial statement without the prior approval of the Controller (Programmes).(233) As Graves explained:

the point is that we have to keep a check here on the amount of broadcasting done by Cabinet Ministers. They are, of course, given opportunities for speaking factually about Bills and such like matters which have passed through the House, but we need to watch and see that this is not overdone, otherwise we might find ourselves in the position of having the Opposition trying to make out that the Government was being given too big a showing. (234)

But the justice of Labour's complaint was believed to be given greater poignancy by the episode relating to Eden's resignation. Middleton, as we have seen, immediately requested facilities to put forward Labour's views in the issues arising from Eden's departure from the Cabinet. On receiving a refusal, Middleton then discovered that Eden was to be given the chance to broadcast. The occasion was the Annual Banquet of the Royal Society of St. George. But this was immaterial to Labour politicians, since a leading Conservative, who had resigned from the Cabinet on a major point of policy, was now being given the opportunity to broadcast. As he was no longer a Minister it was difficult for Middleton to understand why Eden should be granted any opportunity to put forward his views, since this was not in accordance with established Corporation practice - unless it was now the policy of the BBC to invite leading politicians who were not Ministers to speak. The Party interpreted BBC action as evidence of duplicity and further justification of Labour's case for facilities to put across its own views.(235)

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231. BBC, P.G., Record of an interview between Ogilvie, Graves, Attlee and Greenwood, 1 December 1938.
232. Interestingly, Ogilvie was received warmly in the Labour Press on becoming the new Director General; and Harold Laski was quoted as saying of him 'By nature he won't hanker after any "power" or dictatorship of the BBC.'. Daily Herald, 20 July 1938, p.7.
233. BBC, P.MB., Director, Programme Administration to Standard Programme Administration Distribution, 20 April 1937.
234. Ibid., Graves to Director, Programme Administration, 11 May 1937.
235. Ibid., P.G., Middleton to Reith, 10 March 1938.

The point was reiterated by Attlee during the meeting of the Labour deputation with the BBC three weeks later. He accepted that the Government, 'in the nature of things', had greater opportunities to broadcast. What concerned him was the distinct lack of opportunities for the Official Opposition. He urged that 'now and then' the Official Opposition should be given the chance to state its policy, and accepted that the other Parties should be offered facilities to reply, in the manner of the Budget talks.(236)

This was not what the BBC had initially envisaged. Before the deputation's visit the Corporation was thinking in terms of avoiding exhausting wrangles with the Parties by concentrating any expansion of political broadcasting, if any was to take place, on talks and debates by recognised authorities:

Political broadcasts in the wider social sense of broadcasts which serve to educate the electorate on issues which are not necessarily very controversial, or, at least, are not treated controversially, or actively before the public or Parliament. (237)

The impact of the meeting was considerable. As Nicolls put it:

the Labour Party is not likely to be satisfied with anything less than the most controversial Party political subjects. (238)

There would be no advantage to the BBC in trying to avoid Party wrangling by sidestepping the question of party political broadcasting, since the Labour Party felt so strongly about the matter that the Corporation would be drawn in to a publicly embarrassing dispute if party broadcasting was denied. A scheme for Category A broadcasts was approved by the Board of Governors shortly afterwards.

Again, therefore, a measure of success had been achieved by Labour. But other problems remained, not least of which was the

236. BBC, P.G., Record of a Meeting between a Deputation from the Labour Party and a Committee of the Board of Governors and the Director General, 30 March 1938.

237. Ibid., Nicolls, 'Political Broadcasts', 3 June 1938; Tallents to Reith, 15 March 1938.

238. Ibid., Nicolls, 'Political Broadcasts', 3 June 1938.

prominence of Ministers in News Talks to the exclusion of Labour representatives. In the first three months of 1938, for example, eleven Ministers gave such talks, but no members of the Official Opposition were invited to do so.(239) Unfortunately there is little information available concerning such talks and the frequency or otherwise of Ministers and Opposition speakers, so no clear picture can be drawn of the general pattern of such talks over a period of a year or more. Even so it would seem that with the deteriorating international situation the number of Ministerial appearances in News Talks steadily increased, with regular announcements on A.R.P., recruitment to various domestic services, and other preparations for war. The Labour Party complained that Ministers were using these occasions to gain publicity for themselves.(240)

In addition accusations of a biased treatment in favour of the Government were made in connection with outside broadcasts.(241) The occasion which prompted this charge by Emmanuel Shinwell was the broadcast of a speech by the Lord Privy Seal, Sir John Anderson, at a function presided over by the Lord Mayor. But the principal speaker in this instance was Herbert Morrison, whose speech was not broadcast, and who apparently knew nothing about the intention to broadcast until shortly before it took place. The incident prompted 'some score letters....and ...fifty telephone calls' to the BBC complaining of this unfair exclusion of Morrison.(242) What also annoyed Morrison was that

the Prime Minister was using your organisation on the Monday, the Lord Privy Seal on the Tuesday, and the Prime Minister again in a political speech in which he was critical of the Labour Party, on the Saturday.

It seems to me that Ministers are getting a share of broadcasting out of proportion to that of the Opposition. (243)

This was more than a case of pique on Morrison's part. The regularity of Ministerial appearances was widely noticed, and in some quarters resented as conferring upon the Conservative Party an unfair electoral

239. BBC, P.APB., Nicolls to Tallents, 4 May 1938.

240. Ibid., P.G., Nicolls to Maconachie, 16 December 1938.

241. Hansard, vol.343, cols.635-6, 6 February 1939.

242. BBC, P.MB., M.Farquharson to Nicolls, 30 January 1939.

243. Ibid., Morrison to Ogilvie, 27 January 1939, 6 February 1939.

advantage. Writing in the weekly Cooperative News, 'Michael', for example, complained of the 'number of times the Prime Minister tries to get on the air', adding:

Jewellers' dinners, National Service appeals, and every sort of pretext is used to bring him to the microphone. As a result, his somewhat acidulated personality is made familiar to listeners, and he is able to repeat over and over again his apologia for his foreign policy, and to attack critics as irresponsible wreckers.

With a general election not many months off, this is bound to give the Government a most unfair advantage if it is allowed to go on, for no Opposition broadcast has been heard since the Budget. (244)

The cumulative effect of these developments was to encourage Labour leaders to believe that the BBC was not being fair to the Party. This feeling was not dispelled by a well-intentioned invitation by Ogilvie to Attlee to explain to the listening public the issue between him and Sir Stafford Cripps concerning the tactic of the popular front. (245) Attlee considered this quite unprecedented, since it was an attempt to initiate public discussion on internal differences between members of the same political Party, or rather between him and an ex-member, Cripps having been expelled on the 25 January. As he noted rather tartly

No such suggestion has been made, as far as I know, in the case of Mr. Eden or Mr. Duff Cooper... (246)

Attlee suggested that political broadcasting should be confined to discussion of matters between Parties rather than within them. Ogilvie's proposal was probably an innocent one, but Attlee appears to have regarded it as mischievous.

But the main source of concern was a growing conviction that the Government was exercising control over the broadcast talks on foreign affairs. On the day Middleton made a request to the Corporation for the Party to broadcast on the international situation, following Eden's resignation, the BBC banned a broadcast by Colonel Wedgwood, a Labour MP. His talk was part of a major series, 'The Way of Peace', examining

244. 'BBC Gives Way to Political Pressure', Cooperative News, 11 February 1939, p.8. Emphasis in original. Labour claims of unfair treatment appeared to be confirmed when details of the number of talks made by Government speakers and members of the Opposition Parties were later revealed by the Assistant PMG to the House. See Hansard, vol.343, col.2065, 17 February 1939.

245. BBC, P.G., Ogilvie to Attlee, 14 March 1939.

recent international developments, using impartial specialists. Wedgwood's talk was banned because it contained critical references to Hitler and Mussolini, and he refused to remove these comments from his script.(247) On the day the news broke of this matter, Sir Cecil Graves, Controller (Programmes) wrote to Middleton explaining that no talk of the kind which he had proposed could be granted unless it was part of a balanced series:

Should we be officially informed that it was the wish of the Government as well as of the Official Opposition that there should be a broadcast discussion upon the present issue we might be prepared to make arrangements for such a broadcast. (248)

Middleton explained however that the BBC had missed the point. The object of the request was for the Labour Party to make a statement of its policy on the issues arising from the new development in Government foreign policy. On such an issue of national importance the BBC should not abuse its discretionary power.(249) The public, he argued, were being denied the opportunity to hear a balanced discussion on a matter of 'supreme and international importance'.(250) The urgency of such a discussion was sufficient to persuade the Party to send the deputation which had such an impact on the Corporation on 30 March. By the time of this meeting the Labour position had however changed. Arthur Greenwood opened the discussion by saying that 'if the Government refused to allow this broadcast it would be a pity'.(251) This was not an accusatory statement, but one which accepted that behind the decisions of the Corporation was probably the hand of the Government. Attlee said they appreciated 'the statutory position' of the BBC - a reference to Clause 4 of the Licence - and Middleton urged the Board to take the initiative by inviting both Government and Opposition to make a statement on the international situation.

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246. BBC, P.G., Attlee to Ogilvie, 16 March 1939.
247. The Times, 25 February 1938, p.9; Reynolds News, 27 February 1938, p.7. The matter was subsequently raised in the House of Commons. Hansard, vol.333, col.15, 14 March 1938.
248. BBC, P.G., Graves to Middleton, 25 February 1938.
249. Ibid., Middleton to Reith, 28 February 1938.
250. Ibid., Middleton to Reith, 16 March 1938.
251. Ibid., Record of a Meeting between a Deputation from the Labour Party and a Committee of the Board of Governors and the Director General, 30 March 1938.

The record of this discussion is not sufficiently detailed to enable firm conclusions to be drawn, but it would appear that the deputation accepted that the Corporation's freedom of action may be restricted by the Government, but that if it wasn't, then the Board of Governors should offer programme time to both Government and Opposition, and it would be up to each side to use it. It should not be a question of there being a discussion if the Government agreed to take part: the Government would take part if the Opposition had already broadcast. The caution of the BBC was of course deliberate policy. As Tallents explained,

the BBC has lately, of its own initiative and not at Foreign Office suggestion, felt obliged to exercise a special reserve in the arrangement and handling of broadcast debates on live international political issues. If broadcast debates had no significance outside this country, any such discretion would be undesirable. (252)

Nicolls concurred in this view: 'foreign politics must be entirely ruled out' of political discussion.(253) Furthermore, the Government made it conditional upon participation in any political debates (and therefore a condition of any political debate taking place) that foreign affairs be excluded.(254) By late 1938 the BBC was so uncertain as to how far it could go that Maconachie felt it necessary to contact the Prime Minister's Office for approval for a non-party discussion of National Service.(255)

Labour claims that 'broadcasting was being used to bolster up the Government' began to suggest, in the words of one Labour observer, that 'the responsibility for this state of affairs does not rest with the BBC'.(256) An accusation by Richard Acland (Liberal) in the House of Commons that it was the Prime Minister who decided whether or not the Opposition Parties should be allowed to broadcast their views on

252. BBC, P.G., Tallents to Reith, 15 March 1938.

253. Ibid., Nicolls to Graves, 30 May 1938.

254. Ibid., Record of a telephone conversation between Tallents and Margesson, 20 July 1938.

255. Ibid., Maconachie to Nicolls, 12 October 1938.

256. Cooperative News, 18 March 1939, p.13.

foreign affairs reflected a widespread belief.(257) It was a charge that the Chairman of the Board of Governors found difficult to refute:

it is uncomfortably near the truth to say that the decision who should speak is in the hands of the Prime Minister. (258)

Indeed, the TUC and the Labour Party became very keenly aware of the influence which the Government was exerting in the Corporation when the National Council of Labour attempted to broadcast to the German people on the 25 August 1939. The Prime Minister's Secretary telephoned the Assistant Controller (Programmes) to say that he did not want the message to be broadcast. A summary of the message was broadcast in the Home News Bulletin, and Hugh Dalton and Citrine were 'apoplectic with fury at our refusal to broadcast the whole message'.(259) The Foreign Office eventually withdrew their objections, and the full message was broadcast, in German. But the damage had been done, and the incident revealed to the NCL the overt control by the Government over the BBC. Despite reassurances by Sir Samuel Hoare in July 1939 that the Government had no intention of taking the BBC over,(260) the NCL saw things quite differently. The whole atmosphere of inhibition which had had such an effect on the film industry could not but affect, in their view, the Corporation, and this latest incident confirmed their suspicions. For the first few months of the war the Labour Party and the TUC had little to do with the BBC. 'The TUC', complained Citrine, 'had been deliberately flouted and ignored' by the BBC from the beginning of the war.(261)

There were of course other occasions when Labour politicians gained access to the airwaves, namely the general political broadcast talks, debates and discussions which featured regularly in the Programme

257. Hansard, vol.345, cols.1843-6, 27 March 1939.

258. BBC, P.G., Norman to Tryon, 5 April 1939.

259. Ibid., Talks. Trades Union Congress., 'Record of Telephone Conversation with Dalton', minuted remarks by Wellington and Ogilvie, 25 August 1939.

260. Hansard, vol.350, col.1838, 28 July 1939.

261. BBC, Policy. Trades Unions., Ogilvie to Nicolls, 11 December 1939.

Schedule. As the Ullswater Report recognised, such talks tended 'to devote more time to the expression of new ideas and the advocacy of change', (262) and for this reason proved most attractive to Labour speakers. Herbert Morrison made frequent appearances, talking on such subjects as 'London's Green Belt' (8 December 1936), 'The Work of the LCC' (21 May 1937), and 'London's Part in the Air Raid Precautions' (21 March 1938). Ellen Wilkinson gave a News Talk on her Hire Purchase Bill on the night it received its third reading in the House of Lords, 14 July 1938. Margaret Bondfield took part in a round table discussion on 'Trade Unionism and Industry' (11 January 1938). George Dallas made regular appearances to discuss, for example, 'The Farm Worker and the Future' (25 March 1938), 'Family Allowances' (26 May 1938) and 'Private Enterprise and Public Ownership in Electricity' (25 October 1938). Similarly, Labour intellectuals such as Harold Laski and Richard Crossman became regular contributors to this type of programme, taking part in debates such as 'A Second Chamber is Neither Necessary nor Desirable' (18 January 1936) and 'A Penny on the Rates' (20 January 1939).

These talks were not party political, and were highly regarded by the BBC staff, not just for their good programme value, but because they were an effective means of ensuring that the BBC's contribution to the political education of the listening public was not subordinated to the narrow interests of party politics. There were limits however to what was possible in such general political broadcasting. The absence of a news collecting department within the BBC prevented the development of up-to-the-minute analysis of political affairs. This was also difficult for other reasons. The majority of programmes were scripted, and a programme series took both a considerable time to prepare and often a few weeks to transmit. In the India series for example, it took six weeks for the twelve talks to be broadcast. Nor was the modern technique of using a professional broadcaster to provide a summary argument used: the chosen representatives or recognised authorities had to speak for themselves, making debates cumbersome and unduly long. In addition, the commitment of the BBC to the principle of 'balance' in practice made it difficult for the late inclusion of a debate or talk on an issue which had suddenly become the subject of controversy, since the Programme

Schedule had to be planned well in advance, and there was usually little time available (at late notice) within the Schedule for the insertion both of an initial talk on a subject and the necessary reply.(263) Moreover, it was usual practice in general political broadcast talks and discussions for the brief given to each contributor to exclude direct reference to party policies. Strict conditions were set for prospective speakers to ensure that their talks did not become too polemical or stray too far from the specific subject of the series; and it appears that generally even speakers regarded by the Corporation as very controversial, such as D.N.Pritt and Harold Laski, accepted these terms and stuck faithfully to their contractual obligations.(264) Only on rare occasions did serious problems arise, most notably in the case of William Ferrie, a member of the Communist Party and an official of the National Union of Vehicle Workers. His talk, part of a series on 'The National Character', was cut off after he strayed from the script which had been re-written for him by the producer of the series Mary Adams.(265)

Consequently, while Attlee and his colleagues may have wished to be able to walk into a studio at short notice and air their views in an impromptu manner on a subject of great topicality, it was virtually impossible for them to do so; and only very occasionally could an unscripted debate on a highly political issue take place. One such debate, on 'Planning', was possible only because the speakers, Harold Macmillan, John Strachey and Arnold Plant, 'understood the necessity of balancing each other's opinions'.(266)

There were programme formats which allowed greater latitude. The Midland Region's Midland Parliament, (and later, Northern Region's Northern Cockpit), provided an attractive forum of debate. Each speaker was able to make an uninterrupted statement, which was followed by an impromptu discussion. Subjects covered in the monthly debates included 'Should Employers be Licenced?', 'The Five Day Week', 'What are Fair

263. BBC, Talks. Discussions and Debates., J.M.Rose-Troup to R.Wilson, 7 December 1936. (Hereafter, 'T.DD.')
264. Ibid., Rose-Troup to Wilson, 7 December 1936; Adams to Wilson, 13 March 1936.
265. Ibid., Contributors. William Ferrie.; and W.Ferrie, The Banned Broadcast of William Ferrie (London, 1934).
266. BBC, T.DD., C.V.Salmon to Maconachie, 4 May 1937.

Wages?' and 'Strikes or Conciliation?'; and contributors ranged from MPs to industrialists and trade union officials, as well as ordinary working people. Gradually, by 1938, most talks series of a general political character employed the 'interlocutor technique' as a means of sidestepping the problems which had arisen from the commitment to the principle of balance. By this method an expert (usually a professional broadcaster, but if not, usually a recognised authority with a good broadcasting technique) adopted the role of the ordinary listener, but using his/her knowledge of the subject of a talk to ask the speaker penetrating questions from a broadly critical standpoint. By this means a new form of balance, it was hoped, would be established.

One of the attractions of general political broadcast talks for the BBC was that it enabled the Corporation to retain virtually complete control over the programme, from conception to transmission. Occasionally talks arose following suggestions from prominent individuals who were regular contributors - Herbert Morrison and Harold Laski for example, Morrison even managing to persuade Reith to allow a party political broadcast series in connection with the LCC elections in 1937.(267) But the overwhelming majority of such talks, regarded essentially by the BBC as educational in character,(268) arose at the initiative of the Corporation, which recruited its speakers from highly selective lists regularly compiled by the Talks Department. Consequently access to the airwaves for this type of broadcast was of a fundamentally different kind from that for party political broadcasting: Labour politicians could not request facilities in their capacity as members of a political Party, only as individuals with a particular field of expertise; and anyone who exceeded the terms of reference of their talk, as defined by the Corporation, would probably never be given the chance to broadcast again. Even so, from a reading of the Radio Times and an examination of the material in the administrative and contributors' files in the BBC Archive, there seems to be little evidence either that Labour was treated unfairly in the opportunities arising for this category of broadcast programme, or that Labour leaders regarded themselves as being treated unfairly.(269)

267. See the correspondence with Reith, December 1936 - February 1937, in BBC, Contributors. Herbert Morrison.

268. Ibid., P.G.E., Record of an interview between Margesson, Ogilvie and Graves, 24 January 1939.

269. Although in 1933 Kingsley Martin was convinced that he had been blacklisted by the BBC. C.H.Rolph, Kingsley op.cit., p.297.

As for the procedure for General Election broadcasting, Attlee and Greenwood believed that the arrangements made in 1935 'were the best that had yet been achieved'.(270) They accepted that it was the responsibility of the BBC merely to provide time within the Programme Schedule for speeches, and not to determine the allocation of those periods between the different Parties. The Labour Party's view was that when Parliament had been dissolved there was in effect no Government, and that it was therefore unfair that the late Government should be allotted more broadcasts than the Opposition. Attlee and Greenwood maintained that time should be allocated equally between the Government and Opposition Parties on the lines of one Government speech for each Opposition speech. There was a rider however that only Opposition Parties 'with strong backing' should be allowed to participate.(271)

Shortly after the Labour Party's meeting with the Director General in December 1938 Ogilvie had conversations with Margesson to elicit the Government view. Margesson accepted the validity of the argument that 'the existing Government and the apparent alternative Government should be treated on a 50/50 basis'.(272) Minority Parties should be considered after nomination day, and any fielding more than twenty candidates should be given an opportunity to broadcast, for a shorter period at a less important time of day. Attlee, on hearing of these suggestions was 'much pleased and satisfied', regarding them 'a fair solution of this difficult question'.(273) The subsequent agreement arrived at between the Parties allowed for twelve broadcast talks of twenty minutes each, allocated in proportion 5:5:2 for the Government, the Labour Opposition and the Liberal Opposition. The Government was to speak first and last, with three days clear of talks before polling day. The claims of minority Parties would be considered after nomination day, and a criterion of twenty candidates was to be applied. Any Parties meeting that criterion would be entitled to a single broadcast which would be separate from the main series. Lastly, no other talks of a political nature, or with political implications,

270. BBC, P.G., Record of an interview between Attlee, Greenwood, Ogilvie and Graves, 1 December 1938.

271. Ibid.

272. Ibid., P.G.E., Record of an interview between Margesson, Ogilvie and Graves, 24 January 1939.

273. Ibid., Margesson to Ogilvie, 3 February 1939; Attlee to Ogilvie, 6 February 1939.

were to be given during the election period.(274) The Election of course never came. But the arrangements represent a major step forward for the Labour Party from the 1935 agreement. Given the importance of the likely election issues, and the consequences which such an election could have for the future of the Labour Party, the gain was more than theoretical, since Labour leaders worked on the assumption, up to early 1939 at least, that an election was close at hand.

5.

The Independent Labour Party's attempts to gain access to broadcasting facilities were almost wholly unsuccessful. Apart from one or two talks, such as James Maxton's discussion with Sir Ernest Benn on the question 'Should Death Duties be Abolished?', on 21 January 1933, the Party was virtually excluded from the airwaves for the entire decade. It was trapped in a situation which had no satisfactory solution, since, before it disaffiliated from the Labour Party, it was regarded as a minority grouping within a major Party and as such could not be given special treatment over and above that afforded to the Labour Party as a whole; and following disaffiliation it became a minority Party with so few MPs that it did not meet the criteria by which broadcasting facilities were allocated.

In May 1931 for example the ILP requested an opportunity for the Party to put forward its views in the series of talks on 'Export Trade Policy'. The BBC replied that party political broadcasts were arranged by the Whips of the three main Parties in the House of Commons recognised by the Speaker; and that the question of allowing minority views to be broadcast from within a major Party was one with which Whips should deal.(275) Similarly, prior to the General Election of 1931 John Paton made requests for the Party to be included in the series of Election broadcasts, since the other Parties were allowed to, the ILP was running independently of the Labour Party, and it would field twenty-five candidates. The reply from the BBC was simply that

274. BBC, P.GE., Siepmann to Wellington (Assistant Controller (Programmes)), 19 July 1939.

275. Ibid., Policy. Political Broadcasting. Independent Labour Party., G.Murray (Assistant Controller (Information)) to J.Paton (Secretary of the ILP), 27 May 1931. (Hereafter, 'P.ILP.')

the Party Whips had made arrangements, implying that they could not now be altered.(276) When Fenner Brockway tried to persuade the Corporation to include Maxton in a series of talks on 'The Causes of War', the BBC was again able to plead innocence: the arrangements had already been completed and it was impossible to extend the series.(277) Brockway accepted this in good faith, but hoped that in any future series on economic or political questions the Corporation would consider the Party.

The problem of making arrangements which satisfied the three main Parties and included minority views was one which the BBC never satisfactorily resolved, largely because of the power conferred upon the three largest Parties by the Corporation in the desire to avoid becoming too involved in the wearisome negotiations. Consequently, where party political broadcasting was concerned the BBC was disinclined to press for the inclusion of other views which could only jeopardise the delicate equilibrium which had been achieved at various times between Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties. To a large degree therefore the ILP was crowded out of this type of broadcasting, not by the BBC, but by the other Parties. In the matter of general political broadcasting the control which the BBC retained enabled it to determine which organisations and individuals spoke, and on which subjects. But even here the logistics of large series served to preclude the ILP's involvement. In the case of the India series for example the twelve talks presenting a balance of authoritative statements and Party views, including minority views within the Conservative Party, were designed to explore particular themes, providing coherence to the series. The ILP's views on India simply did not, it would appear, fit in with the broad conception of the series, and the request had to be refused.(278) Again, in regard to the ill-fated series 'The Citizen and His Government', the ILP's request had to be refused because, as Graves explained,

276. BBC, P.G., Paton to Reith, 10 October 1931; R.Eckersley to Paton, 12 October 1931. The criterion for inclusion in the series was 40 candidates.

277. Ibid., P.ILP., Siepmann to Brockway, 22 October 1934; Brockway to Siepmann, 23 October 1934.

278. New Leader, 25 January 1935, p.5.

There is no question of including in this series more than the main trends of opinion on the subject. It would not be possible, without entirely unbalancing the series, to add other points of view. (279)

Ever optimistic, Brockway again tried to get his Party's views broadcast, in the series of election talks in 1935, justifying the ILP's inclusion by indicating that it intended to field twenty candidates. The BBC had decided to wait until nomination day before allocating time in the Programme for minority Parties, and the delay convinced Maxton that the ILP was simply being ignored, the victim of a conspiracy of the three main Parties in collusion with the Corporation.(280) Reith tried to reassure him that if the ILP put forward twenty candidates then it was likely that the Party would be given the chance to broadcast. In the event, the ILP had only seventeen candidates, and no facilities were granted. Thereafter, the absence of material from the correspondence files of the BBC, and the steady decline in items in the New Leader on broadcasting, suggest that the dwindling Party gave up trying to overcome the ruthless logic of the two-party system.

Where the ILP did occasionally succeed in gaining access to the airwaves the Communist Party was totally excluded from political broadcasting between 1928 and 1939. On at least three occasions, and there were unlikely to be many more, individual members of the CPGB took part in broadcast discussions, but as recognised authorities rather than as representatives of the Party expounding its policy or views. The individuals concerned were John Strachey and Arthur Horner. Horner for example took part in a discussion in the series 'Class - An Inquiry Into Social Distinction' on 15 November 1938, explaining the marxist approach to 'class'. Attempts were made at various times to obtain facilities, but in every case the Party's request was flatly refused, and usually with no explanation being given.

279. BBC, P.ILP., Graves to Brockway, 25 September 1935.

280. Ibid., P.GE., Brockway to Reith 24 October 1935; Maxton to Reith, 28 October 1935.

On hearing of the Postmaster General's decision to permit some controversial broadcasting in March 1928, the CPGB contacted the Corporation requesting inclusion in any arrangements. Reith replied that the new scheme for political broadcasting was being arranged solely with the three main political Parties in the House of Commons, 'which may be presumed to reflect the opinion of the large majority of the electorate'.(281) Undeterred, Shapurji Saklatvala, the first Communist MP, asked unsuccessfully, for 'an opportunity to broadcast on "The Perils of Bogus Socialism"', in connection with the Labour Party Annual Conference. With the approach of the General Election of 1929 J.R.Campbell wrote to Reith that he was 'amazed' that the BBC should make arrangements for election broadcasts without taking the CPGB into account; and he claimed the right to the same facilities as those granted to the three main Parties.(282) Reith simply replied that the Corporation was unable to provide the Communist Party with any broadcasting facilities in connection with the General Election. Saklatvala regarded this as unfair since the BBC was a public body 'which claims to hold the ring for all Parties'. What was particularly damaging in his view, was that many people believed that only those political Parties allowed to broadcast were entitled, legally, to field candidates, and therefore any refusal on the part of the BBC to allow the CPGB to broadcast could be very damaging.(283) Albert Inkpin put the Party's case more aggressively:

The exclusion of our Party from broadcasting means that the Board of your Company, composed as it is of representatives of various capitalist interests and of members of the three capitalist parties, is utilising the funds provided in large measure by working class tax payers to convey only capitalist propaganda to wireless listeners. We protest against this open and arrogant class control of broadcasting and demand that you should immediately review your decision and admit us to the same facilities as the other parties. (284)

In 1931 the Party again requested similar facilities to those granted to the three main Parties. On this occasion the reply was that:

- 281. BBC, P.PPB., Reith to Inkpin, 10 May 1928.
- 282. Ibid., P.GE., Campbell to the BBC, 10 April 1929.
- 283. Ibid., Saklatvala to the BBC, 2 May 1929.
- 284. Ibid., Inkpin to the BBC, 3 May 1929. Reith was unmoved.

the arrangements had already been made and could not be altered. In 1935 however Pollitt's request received a surprise reply: the BBC would consider his request. Since the CPGB was not contesting many seats, its policy being to support the Labour Party candidate where possible, this was a rather empty gesture, made in the almost certain knowledge that the Party would not field more than twenty candidates. The calculated risk worked, and Pollitt was denied access to the microphone.(285) Thereafter, the Party appears to have abandoned any hope of broadcasting to the nation, until May 1939, when a misleading article in the Daily Herald suggested that the BBC was willing to give any political Party air-time provided that it was represented in the House of Commons.(286) Pollitt immediately wrote to the BBC requesting that the Party's sole MP, William Gallacher, be given the opportunity to take part in the monthly party political broadcasts recently arranged.(287) Tallents, the BBC's Controller (Public Relations), replied that the series to which Pollitt referred was agreed only on the basis that it was limited to the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Parties.

While the Party therefore was completely excluded from the airwaves, it should be noted that Harry Pollitt was invited to take part in a major series, 'The Citizen and His Government', to put forward the Communist Party's view of the democratic system of government, and its proposals for improving it. That the series was cancelled, largely because Pollitt and Sir Oswald Mosley were to take part, was further confirmation for the CPGB, if any was needed, of the fundamental bias of the BBC against the Party.(288) It should also be noted that the reasons for inviting Pollitt to take part in the talks were firstly to add appeal to the series, and secondly to provide an opportunity for communist (and fascist) views to be roundly attacked and discredited.(289)

285. For the brief correspondence, see BBC, P.GE.

286. Daily Herald, 3 May 1939.

287. BBC, P.PPB., Pollitt to Nicolls, 10 May 1939.

288. See for example, Daily Worker, 18 March 1936, p.3.

289. BBC, Talks. The Citizen and His Government., Record of an interview between Graves (Controller (Programmes)) and Sir Robert Vansittart. (Foreign Office), 27 September 1935.

To conclude this Chapter, it is evident that the high hopes and somewhat naive ambitions which Labour politicians had for the BBC in the years immediately following the inauguration of political broadcasting remained, by 1939, largely unfulfilled. While access per se was, from 1928 onwards, no longer a fundamental problem, it was nevertheless a problem which was never fully satisfactorily resolved. This was in part due to chance circumstances: for most of the pre-war decade Labour was not in power, and it was the Government of the day which enjoyed the privileges of general access to the airwaves. But it was also due to an aversion amongst the Party Leaders to allowing the BBC to deal freely with party politics. By passing the main burden of responsibility for party political broadcasting to the three political Parties in the House of Commons Reith and Ogilvie had, in effect, created a situation in which this particular form of political broadcasting would feature only minimally in the Programme Schedule under normal circumstances, since the inability of these Parties to reach agreement ensured that few party political talks series took place for most of the decade. This was not, of course, intended by Reith or his successor, and they and their senior staff were fully aware of the inadequacy of the BBC's coverage of party political affairs. Nor was it intended by the Parties, although there were suspicions amongst Labour leaders that the high-handed and aggressive negotiating style of the Conservatives was calculated either to prevent any agreement being reached, or to achieve terms which conferred upon them an unequivocal advantage. In both cases Labour would lose out, since, in the first instance the Party needed to use the radio to overcome the disadvantages of little press support and inadequate funds for sustained mass propaganda; and in the second, any disproportionate advantage which the Conservatives may secure could effectively neutralise any benefit which Labour might derive from using the medium. Party political broadcasting, in general terms therefore, never materialised on the scale which the Labour Party expected.

Similarly, the essential reluctance of senior BBC staff to relinquish responsibility completely for all political broadcasting ensured that general access to other forms of political broadcasting was not possible. Adherence to a strictly non-partisan conception of general political broadcasting, one which relied heavily on the use of recognised experts rather than Party polemicists, and one which was

based on the principle of balance, ensured that no political Party was able to use this particular form of broadcasting to publicise its views and policies, except in the most oblique and attenuated manner. Access then, was possible, but it was either subject to very strict regulation and only vaguely corresponded to the needs of the Labour Party, or was largely theoretical, pending agreement amongst the Parties. The only opportunities for party political broadcasting which the Labour Party could rely on as certainties were on the occasion of a General Election and, after 1933, the Budget.

As Labour quickly discovered however, access in itself was of only limited value: the second essential problem was equality of access to broadcasting facilities with Labour's chief political opponents, the Conservatives. It soon became apparent to MacDonald and Lansbury that the BBC, at the very least, was both insensitive to the Party's position and exasperatingly unfair in its treatment of Labour in comparison with the Conservatives. At times specific circumstances generated deep resentment amongst Labour politicians as the quest for equitable treatment proved as elusive as ever. In particular, the use of the radio by the National Government to make Ministerial statements was a constant source of bitterness.

It was the fundamental faith amongst Labour politicians in the public value of the BBC which accounts in some measure for the intensity of feeling generated by these frictions, since at times the Corporation appeared to be acting in effect, if not intentionally, as a channel for Conservative publicity rather than as a strictly impartial public service. It was also this faith, and the strategic importance of the BBC in the continuing democratic development of Britain, that encouraged the Party's leaders to persist in their claim for fair treatment. Such persistence gradually produced rewards. In 1929 J.C.C. Davidson refused to accept the principle of equality of treatment in a General Election in a three party system. Ten years later Margesson accepted parity in a General Election in what was virtually a two party system. There were of course a number of points on which the Party made no progress. Most notable was the refusal of the BBC to allow Labour to use, at its own request, the microphone to broadcast on issues of national importance without first having secured the agreement of the National Government to a balanced series. In this

way the Labour Party found it impossible to attack key Government policies on the air. Consequently, while the gains made by the Party between 1928 and 1939 in connection with political broadcasting should not be underestimated, the central issues of general access to broadcasting facilities, and equality of access with Labour's political opponents, remained highly contentious.

CONCLUSION

The development of the use of film by the Labour movement in Britain originated largely within the context of the activities of the Communist Party and its auxiliary organisations. The production, distribution and exhibition of films by Labour organisations in Britain arose from a combination of circumstances, including the need to generate support for the Soviet Union, the growing political and aesthetic interest in Soviet films, and the censorship of those films by the British Board of Film Censors and local Licensing Authorities. Films were used essentially to perform a cadre function, generating political consciousness and contributing to the development of a 'workers' culture'. Of particular importance in this respect was the conception of the commercial cinema which prevailed within the cadre levels of the movement. Profound exception was taken to the soporific influence exercised by the cinema and the mass psychology which, it was believed, the cinema was creating. Given the ultimately rationalist character of Labour ideology the pervasiveness of the cinema and its somewhat mysterious ability to influence people's attitudes and behaviour provided a new and compelling means of accounting for the inability of the mass population to act in accordance with their imputed objective interests and vote into power Labour's political representatives. On this view the cinema did not simply induce a politically dangerous lethargy by chance, but was an instrument of direct manipulation. For Labour observers the cinema industry was in conscious collusion with the movement's political opponents. But even trenchant theorists of conspiracy accepted that there was never a complete correspondence of interests between the Conservative-dominated National Government and a cinema industry dominated by American distributors. They recognised the determination of the Government to prevent the showing of films, especially newsreels, which could cause political embarrassment or provide a focal point for criticism of major Government policies. It was within this context that attempts were made to use film by sections of the Labour movement. Its purpose was to cultivate an alternative conception of film, one which emphasised the medium's value as a source of information and political education rather than merely as a source of entertainment.

Labour film work was a political response to the political and ideological character of the commercial cinema. Its most important phase occurred between 1936 and 1939, coinciding with the Spanish Civil

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war and the growing threat of fascist aggression in other parts of Europe. Two film agencies in particular, Kino and the Progressive Film Institute, drew upon these developments, producing and distributing films which contributed to the growth of a broad cultural and political alignment across the country, one which overcame class barriers and political differences. As the principal non-commercial sources of visual news of events in Spain and elsewhere, and of anti-fascist films generally, these groups helped to nourish the growth of anti-fascist and anti-National Government politics on a considerable scale, and need to be seen as part of a much broader left-wing cultural and political thrust in the latter part of the 1930's, of an importance comparable to that of the Left Book Club.

The main organisations of the Labour movement, the Labour Party and the TUC, were interested in the possibility of using films, but were essentially unwilling to provide the funds necessary to sponsor production. This was partly due to poor financial circumstances, but also due to their attachment to more traditional methods of publicity. There was, in addition, a confusion of purpose in regard to the manner in which such Labour films could be used; and the organisational practice of leaving responsibility for publicity and propaganda largely in the hands of local organisations ensured that little would be achieved. Where the Conservatives were most effective was in establishing a film publicity organisation under central control. Such an arrangement was alien to Labour Party and TUC practice, and doubts as to the ability of constituency Parties and Trades Councils to show, through lack of projection facilities, any films which the National Council of Labour may sponsor, discouraged the NCL from taking any practical steps in the direction of film propaganda until late in the decade. That the Workers' Film Association was finally established was due more to the efforts of a few individuals, notably Joseph Reeves, than to any strong commitment on the part of the National Executive Committee or the General Council as a whole. But it was also due to the achievements of the London Cooperative Societies, whose film Advance Democracy demonstrated what could be done to promote the movement and the degree of interest amongst local bodies in using film.

While the leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC lacked any real appreciation and understanding of the medium of film, they recognised in radio broadcasting a medium of immense potential for the

movement. As a public service under monopoly control, it provided a successful model of the practical application of socialist principles. There were aspects of its organisation which caused concern, notably the extensive powers of the Director General and the formal relationship of the Corporation with the State. Criticism of the style of management of Reith was counter-balanced to some degree by gratitude for the ethos of public service with which he had imbued the BBC. The social and cultural value of radio programmes was never in doubt for most Labour observers. But the political sympathies of the Corporation, and of Reith in particular, were regarded as highly suspect. Given the impressive public status of the BBC and the sanction of approval which access to the radio automatically conferred, the use of the medium by the Labour movement was especially attractive. Yet the fundamental character of radio broadcasting as a public service was seen to be placed in jeopardy by the Director General, whose political outlook and autocratic managerial style threatened to compromise the Corporation's independence and impartiality. The NCL never succeeded in bringing Reith and the BBC under greater public control. Nor did the Council manage to strengthen the constitutional position of the Corporation to provide greater protection against abuses by the Government of the day. Labour leaders accepted that such a powerful channel of communication should be brought under direct State control during a national emergency. But they took the view that in normal circumstances the Government should have neither the power to prevent anything from being broadcast, nor the power to have broadcast any material which it desired. While protection against such manipulation was based on trust and an all-Party agreement which typified the inner workings of liberal democracy, there were, in the Labour view, occasions where the putative power of the Government of the day had in effect been exercised, by intimation rather than by formal instruction. These problems had major political implications since the real value of the medium for Labour resided in the general contribution which the BBC could make to the further democratic development of the country. According to this perspective however, by definition such development could only arise through the wider acceptance of the ideas and principles embodied in Labour Socialism, the dominant ideology of the Labour movement. In an age of mass political communication, in which the dramatic growth of the electorate created entirely new political circumstances from those which existed prior to 1918, the relationship between politicians and voters was

fundamentally different. Despite the decline of the Liberal Party there was no guarantee that the rise of Labour would continue unabated; and Baldwin had demonstrated, through his 'new conservatism', that the Conservative Party was able to adjust to these new conditions and capture the middle ground of British politics. With a mass electorate whose political loyalties were uncertain, and whose susceptibility to press manipulation was widely accepted, traditional methods of publicity and propaganda were still necessary, but neither adequate nor fully appropriate. Radio broadcasting, by virtue of being a public service imbued with a high moral purpose and an educational impulse, appeared to Labour leaders to be ideally suited to Labour's predicament. Faced by near universal press hostility, unable to reach large sections of the population with its message, and finding its legitimacy as the alternative Party of office tenuous and uncertain, the Labour Party looked to the medium of radio as a means of overcoming these problems.

In practice the Labour Party gained only limited access to the airwaves, since party political broadcasting was only possible on the basis of balanced series of talks, and the three Parties found it difficult to reach agreement on how this balance was to be drawn. There was no free access to the technology of broadcasting, nor could there be as political broadcasting was only a minor part of the total output of the BBC, and in any case it was not a service intended to satisfy the needs of politicians. But the central issue here for Labour was that under normal political conditions the Party was deprived of the opportunity of being able to broadcast its views on matters of national importance unless the Government consented to a series of party political talks on the subject in question. As the Government of the day enjoyed far greater general access to the microphone, Labour nurtured a strong sense of grievance at the apparent duplicity of the Corporation. Where the Labour Party did succeed in using the microphone it was largely under unfavourable conditions. The claim for full equality of treatment was persistently made and the logic of the Party's case proved increasingly difficult to resist. But any improvements in the Party's position vis-à-vis the question of equality of access were limited and mainly concessionary, and the general principle was never fully recognised by the BBC, much to the exasperation and anger of the Party's leaders.

Finally, during the late 1920s and 1930s the cinema and radio opened up new possibilities in the political and ideological struggle being waged between the Labour movement and its political opponents. The Conservative Party responded to these possibilities far more quickly and effectively than Labour, taking advantage of their control of the institutions of the State for most of these years. These new media of mass political communication offered the opposing sides new means of mass persuasion, involving techniques which were potentially far more effective than more traditional methods. But film and radio also became the site of this struggle. The use of these media for political purposes became in itself a political issue, of direct importance, it was believed by Labour leaders and activists, to the outcome of this contest; and one in which the advantage, and the initiative, tended to reside with the Party in power.

Appendix: FILMOGRAPHYIntroduction

The Filmography is arranged in four sections: A. British Films, B. Soviet Films, C. Spanish Films and D. Other Foreign Films. Entries are listed alphabetically rather than by producer or distributor, to provide easier access to the production and distribution details of individual films. An overall picture of the scope of production and distribution for each Labour film agency is provided by Tables XI and XII which follow these listings.

Section A, British Films, includes all films of a political character produced by or for the Labour movement between 1929 and 1939. It also includes films made by non-commercial or independent film organisations which were bought by Labour film groups for their libraries. The commercial publicity films of the Cooperative movement have not been included, since the principal concern of the study is with the political use of film rather than the use of film for purposes of general education and commercial publicity. Similarly, commercial films shown by organisations such as the Workers' Film Association have been omitted from the list, even though the WFA acted in effect as an agent for commercial distributors, providing complete programmes of films for Labour Parties and trade union branches. Entries include films which were made but not released; and the symbol (+) is used to indicate that a film may not have been completed. An (*) is used to indicate the existence of copies of films in the National Film Archive, although not all such copies are in a viewable condition. Copies of many of those so denoted are also in the possession of Stanley Forman of Educational and Television Films Ltd.

Section B, Soviet Films, provides a list of all Soviet productions made available in this country between 1924 and 1939 which were distributed by Labour film agencies. It also includes films distributed by other groups such as Friends of the Soviet Union and Unity Films, which either identified with the movement or whose personnel were Labour activists participating in the activities of Labour film agencies (Basil Burton for example, of Unity Films, was a key member of Kino). Section C provides a list of Spanish films made available in Britain between 1936 and 1939, in connection with the Civil War. Section D, Other Foreign Films, includes all other foreign

material obtained by Labour film agencies for their libraries between 1929 and 1939.

The listings provide details for each film of the country of origin, production company (or, in some cases, individual producers), the gauge (9.5mm, 16mm or 35mm), whether or not the film was silent (sl) or sound (sd), its length in minutes, its distribution company, date of release in this country, and any alternative titles by which the film was known. In a number of cases not all this information is available. The absence of documentary evidence for individual film agencies has proved a major problem in the compilation of this filmography. There are no single primary sources to which reference can be made for a full list of films which any particular agency produced or distributed. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that any such sources ever existed. Consequently, these listings can not be considered complete. Nevertheless, from the sources available it has been possible to compile lists which are virtually complete.

Film titles and the associated production and distribution details have been derived from various sources. The administrative records of the Film and Photo League in the Hugh Cuthbertson Papers provide accurate and reliable information for FPL and some Kino films. Similarly, the Herbert Marshall Collection, which contains a large number of Kino publicity slips and advertising material, provides accurate information concerning films in Kino's library. Correspondence in the files of the National Council for Civil Liberties and the Acquisition Files in the National Film Archive provide reliable information concerning the films held by the Progressive Film Institute. The Catalogues of the National Film Archive, the Board of Trade Journal, the Slade Film History Register, V.Wegg-Prosser's unpublished 'Notes on the Films of the Film and Photo League', and extensive viewing have provided cross-checks and additional information. (A list of films viewed is provided in the Bibliography.) For films which have not survived the principal sources of information have been the various journals and newspapers referred to in the main body of the thesis, and in particular advertisements in the Daily Worker; and the sources already mentioned above. Further information has also been derived from the various catalogues published by the Workers' Film Association between 1939 and 1943, the BFI's publication Some British and Foreign Documentary and other Short Films (1938), and the Monthly Film Bulletin. Jay Leyda's Kino (1973) provided a basic reference for

Soviet films. Other reference works on Soviet cinema were consulted, but little information could be found concerning rather obscure film titles such as Jewish Colonisation in the USSR.

In a few cases little information is available regarding the origins or format of British films. Advertisements in the Daily Worker or Reynolds News may refer to a title and nothing more; but the frequency of such advertisements establishes the existence of a film and its use. Reliance on contemporary journals has its pitfalls, and where possible cross-checks have been made to minimise errors. The Film and Photo League for example publicised widely a series of films intended to cultivate a popular front; yet from the surviving records of the League it is evident that only one such film, People's Front Newsreel, was ever made. In advertising film exhibitions, it was common for the people concerned to show little regard for accuracy in regard to the details of the films to be shown. A number of films became known by several titles, and a few films, confusingly, had similar titles. Moreover, running times vary considerably from one advertisement to another. Crime Against Madrid for example was advertised as being 30 minutes and 45 minutes in length. Where possible such details have been checked with surviving films. Many films listed no longer survive. In order to minimise confusion and errors the date when a particular film was made available in this country has been pinpointed, where possible, to a specific month in any one year. Where some films share similar titles the date of release and running time are reasonably accurate for material of British origin; but foreign material has been difficult to cross-check in certain cases, and the entries can only be taken as a guide. The date of release, in most cases, refers to the date when the film was first available in this country. There are a few exceptions to this. The Film Society for example imported a few Soviet films in the late 1920s, which were subsequently made available for hire by the Progressive Film Institute several years later. There was also occasionally a delay between the 16mm and 35mm release of a film. Where this occurred release dates for both gauges have been given.

Lastly, in a few cases in Section A entries refer to 'films' which were not intended for release on their own, but as part of newsreels. IILP Summer School, May Day 1935, Tom Mann at Pioneers' Camp and Soviet Folk Dancers were items in Workers' Newsreel No.4. Some surviving films are without titles or are incomplete, and may not have been released. Alternatively, they may have been used as newsreel items and,

on losing their topicality, were cut up again for future use in compilations as stock shots, or shown separately. Busmen's Holiday was shown as a self-contained film and then re-used as part of News Review 1937. There is no general pattern, but where it appears that newsreel material was re-used, the specific items of which the newsreel was made have also been listed individually.

Abbreviations Used in the Listings

BWSA	British Workers' Sports Association
CFEFC	Chinese Far Eastern Film Corporation
CGT	Confédération Générale du Travail
CMPC	China Motion Picture Corporation
CNT	Confédération National des Travailleurs
CP	Communist Party
CWS	Cooperative Wholesale Society
FAI	Iberian Anarchist Federation
FOSR	Friends of Soviet Russia
FPL	Film and Photo League
FSU	Friends of the Soviet Union
IF	International Films
ISF	International Sound Films
LBC	Left Book Club
LCS	London Cooperative Society
MWFS	Merseyside Workers' Film Society
NACEC	National Association of Cooperative Education Committees
NATSOPA	National Society of Operative Printers and Assistants
NJCSR	National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief
NKLP	North Kensington Labour Party
PCF	Parti Communist Francais
PFI	Progressive Film Institute
PJLM	Polish Jewish Labour Movement
PN	People's Newsreel
RACS	Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society
RCVGF	Relief Committee for the Victims of German Fascism
SFC	Socialist Film Council
SMPI	Spanish Ministry of Public Instruction
SPFA	Scottish People's Film Association
WEA	Workers' Education Association
WEA	Workers' Film Association
WFPL	Workers' Film and Photo League
UPOW	Union of Post Office Workers

A. British Films

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
ACROSS THE BORDER	Workers' Travel Ass. 16/sd/10	WFA	1939
*ACTION AGAINST THE MEANS TEST	Film and Photo League 16/sl/10	Kino	1935
*ADVANCE DEMOCRACY	Realist Film Unit 16/35/sd/18	Kino/PFI WFA	Oct 1938
*AGAINST FASCISM	Kino London Prod. Gp. 16/sl/5	Kino	1934
*AGAINST IMPERIALIST WAR, MAY DAY 1932	? Atlas 16/sl/15	? FSU	1932
*ANTI-FASCIST DEMONSTRATIONS, 1937	Kino 16/sl/2	Kino	Nov 1937
+A.R.P.	British Film Unit 16/sd/?	Kino	1939
THE AWAKENING OF MR. COLE	London Cooperative Soc. 16/sd/20	CWS/WFA	May 1939
BANANAS	Dartington Film Unit 16/sl/10	Kino	1936
*BEHIND THE SPANISH LINES	Progressive Film Inst. 16/35/sd/20	Kino/PFI	Jun 1938
*BLOOD BANK SERVICE IN SPAIN	Kino/NJCSR 16/sl/5	Kino/ NJCSR	1938
BLOW, BUGLES, BLOW!	R.Messel/Socialist Film Council 35/sd/75	PFI	Apr 1936
*BREAD	Kino London Prod. Gp. 16/sl/12	Kino	May 1934
BRITAIN EXPECTS	Progressive Film Inst. 16/35/sd/20	Kino/PFI	Dec 1938
THE BUILDERS	Workers' Film Ass. 16/sd/35	WFA	1940
*BUSMEN'S HOLIDAY	Kino/H.A.Green,R.Green 16/sl/7	Kino	Nov 1937
CAMBERWELL IS PREPARED	Workers' Film Ass. 16/sd/30	WFA	Jun 1939
*THE CHALLENGE OF YOUTH (YOUTH MARCHES ON)	Film and Photo League 16/sl/20	FPL	Dec 1937
*CHALLENGE TO FASCISM: GLASGOW'S MAY DAY 1938	Glasgow Kino 16/sl/17	Glasgow Kino	Jun 1938

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
THE CHILDREN'S REPUBLIC	Workers' Film Ass. 16/sl/10	WFA	1939
*CONSTRUCTION	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/10	Kino/FPL	Dec 1935
CORNWALL THE WEST LAND	Workers' Travel Ass. 16/sd/10	WFA	1939
*CORONATION MAY DAY (THE MERRY MONTH OF MAY)	Film and Photo League 16/sl/20	FPL	Jul 1937
*CP DEMONSTRATIONS MAY DAY 1937	Kino 16/sl/9	Kino	Jun 1937
*CP 15th CONGRESS (CP CONGRESS - BIRMINGHAM 1938)	Progressive Film Inst. 16/sl,sd/10	Kino	Oct 1938
*CRIME AGAINST MADRID	CNT/PFI 16/sd/30	Kino	Jul 1937
*THE DAILY WORKER FILM	Kino 9.5/16/sl/3	Kino/PN	Dec 1937
DEFENCE OF BRITAIN	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/10	Kino/FPL	Dec 1935
*DEFENCE OF MADRID	Progressive Film Inst. 16/sl/45	Kino	Nov 1936
*DOCKWORKERS	Film and Photo League 16/sl/10	FPL	Nov 1937
EACH FOR ALL	London Cooperative Soc. 16/sd/20	LCS/CWS	May 1939
FIGHT	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/10	FPL	Dec 1935
GALE OF NATIONS	G.H.Sewell 16/sl/10?	FPL	Oct 1935
+GENEROUS SOIL	Film and Photo League 16/sl/10?	FPL	Oct 1937?
*GLIMPSES OF MODERN RUSSIA	Atlas 35/sl/10	Atlas	Oct 1930
*HELL UNLTD.	Glasgow School of Art 16/sl/20	Kino	Aug 1936
HELP SPAIN	PFI/NJCSR 16/sd/40	Kino/ NJCSR	Sep 1938
HOLIDAY FROM UNEMPLOYMENT	WFPL/Oxford Trades Council 16/sl/15	Kino/FPL	Sep 1935

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
HOMELAND HOLIDAY	Workers' Travel Ass. 16/sd/10	WFA	1939
ILO	Workers' Ed. Ass. 16/sd/10	WEA	1938
*IIP SUMMER SCHOOL, 1935	Kino 16/sl/3	Kino/FPL	Sep 1935
IN THE COUNTRY OF LENIN (A JOURNEY TO SOVIET RUSSIA)	Friends of Soviet Russia 35/sl/?	FOSR	Oct 1928
INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE	Progressive Film Inst. 16/sd/10	Kino	May 1938
*INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE	PFI/Vera Elkan 16/sl/10	Kino	Jul 1938
*INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE EMPRESS HALL RALLY (RETURN OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE)	Ass. Cinematograph Technicians 16/sl/?	not released	(Dec 1938)
INTERNATIONAL COLUMN	Progressive Film Inst. 16/sl/30	Kino	Mar 1937
IT'S UP TO US!	Progressive Film Inst. 16/35/sd/5	Kino/ Left Review	Feb 1937
*JUBILEE 1935 (BRITAIN 1935: JUBILEE YEAR)	North London Film Soc./ WFPL 16/sl/8	Kino/FPL	Oct 1935
LANCASHIRE PEACE DEMONSTRATION	Manchester FPL 16/sl/?	?Manch. FPL	1936
LEFT BOOK CLUB	Progressive Film Inst. 16/35/sl/3	Kino/PFI LBC	Jan 1937
LET'S HAVE A HOLIDAY	Workers' Travel Ass.	WFA	1939
LIMESTONE	Dartington Film Unit 16/sl/10	Kino	Mar 1936
LIVERPOOL: GATEWAY TO EMPIRE	Merseyside Workers' Film Soc. 16/sl/12	MWFS/ Kino	Apr 1934 Feb 1936
*LONDON MAY DAY 1933	?I.Seruya ?E.Silver 16/sl/7	not released	(May 1933)
*LONDON WORKERS' OUTING EASTER 1935	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/3	Kino/FPL	Sep 1935
LONDON'S LABOUR DAY	Kino 16/?sd/5	Kino	Jun 1938

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
*MADRID TODAY	SMPI/PFI 16/35/sd/8	Kino/PFI	May 1937
MANCHESTER AT WORK	Manchester FPL 16/sl/?	Manch. FPL	Oct 1937
*MARCH AGAINST STARVATION	Film and Photo League 16/sl/30	FPL	Apr 1937
MARTYRED TOWNS	International Peace Campaign 16/sd/10	Kino	Sep 1938
*MAY DAY 1935	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/2	Kino/FPL	Sep 1935
*MAY FIRST 1937	Film and Photo League 16/sl/15	FPL	Dec 1937
MEDITERRANEAN JOURNEY	Workers' Travel Ass. 16/sd/10	WFA	1939
MR. ATTLEE IN SPAIN	? Kino 16/35/sl/5	Kino/PFI	Mar 1938
MR. STRAUSS IN SPAIN	? Kino 16/35/sd/5	Kino/PFI	Apr 1938
*MODERN ORPHANS OF THE STORM (BASQUE CHILDREN)	Realist Film Unit/ V.Saville/NJCSR 16/35/sd/10	Kino/PFI NJCSR	1937
*NATIONAL HUNGER MARCH	Kino London Prod. Gp. 16/sl/15	Kino	Apr 1934
NATSOPA'S JUBILEE	Workers' Film Ass. 16/sd/20	WFA	? 1939
NATSOPA SPORTS DAY	NATSOPA 16/sl/?	? Kino	1938
A NEW RECRUIT	London Cooperative Soc. 16/sd/40	LCS/CWS/ WFA	May 1939
*NEWS FROM SPAIN	SMPI/PFI 16/35/sd/40	Kino/PFI NACEC	Apr 1937
NEWS REVIEW 1937	FPL/Kino 16/sl/30	Kino	Dec 1937
1931 (THE CHARTER FILM)	Atlas 35/sl/20	Atlas	May 1931
*NON-INTERVENTION	Progressive Film Inst. 35/sd/10	PFI	Jul 1938
NORTH KENSINGTON NURSERY SCHOOL	M.Nathan/North Kensing- ton Labour Party 16/sl/10	? NKLP	Feb 1937

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
PASSPORT TO EUROPE	Realist Film Unit 16/sd/10	WFA	1939
*PEACE AND PLENTY	Progressive Film Inst. 16/sd/20	Kino	Mar 1939
*PEACE OF BRITAIN	Freenat Films 16/35/sd/4	Kino/ Freenat	Apr 1936
THE PEACE PARADE	Pelly & Healey/LCS 16/sd/12	LCS/CWS/ ISF	Oct 1937
+A PENNY TO SPEND	Film and Photo League 16/sl/?10	FPL	? 1937
*PEOPLE WHO COUNT	Pelly & Healey/LCS 16/sd/20	LCS/CWS/ ISF	Oct 1937
PEOPLE WITH A PURPOSE	Realist Film Unit 16/35/sd/26	RACS/ WFA	Oct 1939
PEOPLE'S FRONT NEWSREEL	Film and Photo League 9.5/16/sl/10	FPL	Dec 1937
PEOPLE'S SCRAPBOOK 1938	People's Newsreel 9.5/sl/6	PN	Jan 1939
+ "POPULAR FRONT FILM No.3"	British Film Unit 16/sd/?40	not released	Febr 1939
ROTTER'S CLAY	London Cooperative Soc. 16/sd/20	LCS/CWS/ WFA	May 1939
*PRISONERS PROVE INTER- VENTION IN SPAIN	Progressive Film Inst. 16/35/sd/5,10	Kino/PFI	Apr 1938
*RED, RIGHT AND BLOO	FPL/LEFT BOOK CLUB 16/sl/35	FPL/LBC	Nov 1937
*REVOLT OF THE FISHERMEN	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/15	FPL	Dec 1935
*RHONDDA (RHONDDA DEPRESSION YEARS)	? Cardiff Kino 16/sl/12	Kino	Apr 1936
*THE ROAD TO HELL	Socialist Film Council 16/sl/40	SFC	Aug 1933
+RUSSIAN JOURNEY	Film and Photo League 9.5/sl/?	FPL	? 1938
*SAVE SPANISH CHILDREN	Kino/NJCSR 16/sl/5	Kino/ NJCSR	Mar 1938
*SCHOOLS IN CATALONIA	Kino/NJCSR 16/sl/5	Kino/ NJCSR	Feb 1938

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
SCOTLAND SPEAKS	Scottish People's Film Ass. 16/sl/?	SPFA/ Kino	Sep 1938
SHEEP DIP	Dartington Film Unit 16/sl/10	Kino	Mar 1936
SHOTS OF THE CLASS WAR	Atlas 35/sl/?	Atlas	1932
SOCIALIST SUMMER SCHOOL	Kino London Prod. Gp. 16/sl/5	Kino	Sep 1934
SOVIET FOLK DANCERS	Film and Photo League 16/sl/5	FPL/Kino	Oct 1935
*SOVIET RUSSIA PAST AND PRESENT	? R.Bond/ ? I.Montagu 9.5/16/35/sl/75	FSU	Jul 1933
SPAIN 1936-37	Film and Photo League 16/sl/15	FPL/Kino	Oct 1937
*SPANISH ABC	Progressive Film Inst. 16/35/sd/20	Kino/PFI	Jun 1938
+SPANISH TRAVAIL (SPANISH DANCE)	Film and Photo League 16/sl/20	FPL	Jan 1938?
*SPIRIT OF MAY DAY	Film and Photo League 9.5/sl/12	FPL	Jul 1937
SPORT	Workers' Film Ass./ BWSA 16/sl/10	WFA	1939
*STOP FASCISM	Kino 16/sd/3	Kino	Apr 1938
THE STORY OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA	London Cooperative Soc. 16/sd/20	LCS/WFA	Oct 1939
*STRIFE	Film and Photo League 16/sl/22	FPL	Sep 1937
*SUSSEX 1939 (PEOPLE'S SCRAPBOOK 1939)	People's Newsreel 9.5/sl/10	PN	Feb 1939
TENANTS IN REVOLT	British Film Unit 16/sd/20	Kino	Jun 1939
*TESTIMONY ON NON- INTERVENTION	Progressive Film Inst. 16/35/sd/33	Kino/PFI	May 1938
TOM MANN AT PIONEERS' CAMP	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/5	Kino/FPL	Sep 1935
TRANSPORT	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/15	Kino/FPL	May 1935

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
A TRIP TO RUSSIA	Manchester. WFPL 16/sl/10,25	Kino/FPL	Sep 1934
A TRIP TO RUSSIA	Friends of the Soviet Union 16/sl/30	Kino/FSU	1936
*THE UNION OF POST OFFICE WORKERS	Union of P.O. Workers 35/sl/40	UPOW	Mar 1927
USSR .	Friends of the Soviet Union 16/35/sl/25	Kino/PFI	Apr 1936
?UTOPIA (TROUBLE IN UTOPIA)	London Cooperative Soc. 16/sd/22	LCS/CWS	Mar 1938
*VITAMINS	Cambridge Film Prods. 16/35/sd/20	Kino/PFI	1937
*VOICE OF THE PEOPLE (ACHIEVEMENT)	Realist Film Unit 16/35/sd/20	Kino/WFA	Oct 1939
*WE ARE THE ENGLISH	Kino/London District Communist Party 16/sl/11	Kino/ISF	Nov 1936
*WEMBLEY PAGEANT (TOWARDS TOMORROW)	London Cooperative Soc. 16/sd/42	LCS/CWS	Sep 1938
*WHAT THE NEWSREEL DOES NOT SHOW	Socialist Film Council 16/sl/30	SFC	Aug 1933
*WINTER	Film and Photo League 16/sl/13	Kino/FPL	Jan 1936
WORKERS' EDUCATION	Royal Arsenal Coop.Soc. 16/sl/10	RACS	1937
WORKERS' EDUCATION (EDUCATE AND LIBERATE)	Royal Arsenal Coop.Soc. 16/sd/10	RACS/WFA	Mar 1939
WORKERS' FILM ASSOCIATION NEWSREEL No.1	Workers' Film Ass. 16/sl/10	WFA	1939
*WORKERS' NEWSREEL No.1	Kino London Prod. Gp. 16/sl/10	Kino/FPL	Aug 1934
*WORKERS' NEWSREEL No.2	Kino London Prod. Gp. 16/sl/15	Kino/FPL	Oct 1934
*WORKERS' NEWSREEL No.3 (UAB; MASS ACTION BEATS THE UAB; FEBRUARY 1934)	Workers' Film & Photo League 16/sl/15	Kino/FPL	Mar 1935
*WORKERS' NEWSREEL No.4	WFPL/Kino 16/sl/15	Kino/FPL	Sep 1935
*WORKERS' TOPICAL NEWS No.1	Atlas 35/sl/5	Atlas	Mar 1930

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
*WORKERS' TOPICAL NEWS No.2	Atlas 35/sl/12	Atlas	May 1930
WORKERS' TOPICAL NEWS No.3	Atlas 35/sl/?15	Atlas	Mar 1931
*YOUTH PEACE PILGRIMAGE	? British Film Unit 16/sl/9	? Kino	Mar 1939

B. Soviet Films

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
ABYSSINIA	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sd/45	PFI/ISF	Dec 1937
ALONE	Soyuzkino 16/sd/80	Kino/PFI	Feb 1937
ANIMAL, VEGETABLE, MINERAL	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sd/10	Kino	Feb 1939
BASQUE CHILDREN	— 16/sl/10	Kino/WFA	Jul 1937
BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN	Goskino 9.5/16/35/sl/55	Atlas Kino PFI	Jan 1930 Dec 1933 Mar 1936
BED AND SOFA	Sovkino 35/sl/70	PFI	Jan 1936
THE BLUE EXPRESS	Sovkino 35/sd/60	Atlas	Dec 1931
THE BROTHERHOOD OF DEATH	Sovkino 35/sl/65	Atlas	Dec 1930
BUILDING THE WHITE SEA CANAL (PORT OF FIVE SEAS)	Vostok-Kino 16/35/sl/30	Kino/PFI	Sep 1935
C.B.D. (S.V.D.; THE CLUB OF THE BIG DEED)	Sovkino 35/sl/80	Atlas	Feb 1930
CHAPAYEV	Lenfilm 35/sd/95	PFI	Jan 1938
THE CIRCUS	Mosfilm 35/sd/90	PFI	May 1938

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
CRIMEA	Intourist 16/35/sl/12	Kino/PFI	Apr 1936
DANCES OF THE PEOPLE OF THE USSR	Soyuzkinochronika 35/sd/18	PFI	May 1939
DEFENCE OF LIBERTY	— 16/sl/10	Kino	1937
THE DESERTER	Mezhrabpomfilm 16/35/sd/95	Kino/PFI	Feb 1937
EARTH	VUFKU 35/sl/60	Atlas	May 1931
THE END OF ST. PETERSBURG	Mezhrabpom-Russ 16/35/sl/85	Atlas Kino/PFI	Apr 1930 Apr 1936
FIRST TIME IN HISTORY	— 35/sl/?	Atlas	1930
FIVE YEAR PLAN	— 35/sl/?	Atlas	Mar 1930
THE FREEMASONS	Mezhrabpom-Russ: 35/sl/?	WIR	1924
FOR THE YOUNG	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sd/10	Kino/PFI	Oct 1938
THE FUNERAL OF STANISLAVSKY	— 35/sd/2	PFI	1938
THE GENERAL LINE (OLD AND NEW)	Sovkino 9.5/16/35/sl/95	Atlas Kino PFI	Mar 1931 Jan 1934 1935
THE GHOST THAT NEVER RETURNS	Sovkino 9.5/16/35/sl/75	Atlas Kino/PFI	1931 Sep 1935
GIANT HARVEST	— 35/sl/?	Atlas	Jul 1930
THE GIRL WITH THE HAT BOX (MOSCOW THAT LAUGHS AND WEEPS)	Mezhrabpom-Russ 35/sl/60	Atlas	May 1931
GROWING UP	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sd/10	Kino	Feb 1939
HARVEST FESTIVAL	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sd/40	Kino	Oct 1937
HEROES OF THE ARCTIC	Soyuzkino 16/35/sl/90	Kino/PFI	May 1935
IF WAR SHOULD COME	Mosfilm 16/35/sd/50	Kino/PFI	Nov 1938

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
IN THE LAND OF THE SOVIETS	International Friends of the Soviet Union 16/sl/35/sd/60	Kino/PFI FSU	Feb 1936
ISOTOV THE BOLSHEVIK	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sl/15	Kino	Jan 1935
IVAN	Mezhrabpom-Russ 35/sl/?	WIR	1924
JAZZ COMEDY	Soyuzfilm 16/35/sl/80	Kino/PFI	Apr 1936
JEWISH COLONISATION IN THE USSR	— 35/sl/10	Atlas	1931
JUBILANT MARCH	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sd/15	Kino/PFI	Nov 1937
THE LAST NIGHT	Mosfilm 35/sd/95	PFI	May 1938
LENIN IN OCTOBER	Mosfilm 35/sd/97	PFI	Dec 1938
LENINGRAD	Intourist 16/35/sl/12	Kino/PFI	Apr 1936
THE LITTLE SCREW	Sovkino 16/sl/10	Kino	Sep 1934
LONE WHITE SAIL	Soyuzdetfilm 35/sd/85	PFI	Jun 1939
MARIONETTES	Mezhrabpomfilm 16/35/sd/80	Kino/PFI	Oct 1937
MAN OF THE WOODS	VUFKU 35/sl/?	Atlas	Jul 1930
MEN AND JOBS	Soyuzkino 16/35/sd/70	Kino/PFI	Apr 1935
MIRACLE OF THE SOLDIER	Mezhrabpom-Russ 35/sl/?	WIR	1924
MOSCOW	Intourist 16/35/sl/15	Kino/PFI	Apr. 1936
MOTHER	Mezhrabpom-Russ 16/35/sl/80	Atlas Kino	Feb 1930 Mar 1935
NEW BABYLON	Sovkino 16/35/sl/80	Atlas Kino	Jul 1930 Jan 1935
NEW MOSCOW	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sd/10	Kino/PFI	Feb 1939
OCTOBER (THE DAYS THAT SHOOK THE WORLD)	Sovkino 9.5/16/35/sl/120	Kino/PFI	Oct 1935

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
OIL SYMPHONY	Azerbaidjan Films 9.5/16/sl/15	Kino	Apr 1935
PALACE OF WONDERS	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sd/12	Kino	Feb 1939
PATRIOTS (OUTSKIRTS)	Mezhrabpomfilm 16/sd/80	Kino/PFI	Nov 1937
PIANO PRODIGIES	Soyuzkinochronika 35/sd/8	PFI	Dec 1937
PLACES AND PEOPLE	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sd/10	Kino	Feb 1939
POLIKUSHKA	Russ 35/sl/50	WIR PFI	1924 1936
PRISONERS	Mosfilm 16/sd/?	Kino	Apr 1937
PROFESSOR MAMLOCK	Lenfilm 35/sd/100	Unity Films	Apr 1939
THE PUPPET MASTER	Soyuzkinochronika 35/sl/8	PFI	Dec 1937
RETURN OF THE NORTH POLE HEROES	Soyuzkinochronika 35/sd/55	PFI	1937
REVOLT OF THE FISHERMEN	Mezhrabpomfilm 16/sd/90	Kino	Oct 1937
THE RICH BRIDE	Ukrainfilm 16/35/sd/80	Kino/PFI	Aug 1939
THE ROAD TO LIFE	Mezhrabpomfilm 16/35/sd/105	Kino/ISF	Dec 1936
RUSSIA 1936	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sl/10	Kino/FSU	Apr 1937
RUSSIA ON HOLIDAY	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sd/?	Kino	Nov 1938
RUSSIA TODAY (RUSSIAN NEWSREEL No.1)	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sl/10	Kino/PFI FSU	Jan 1935
RUSSIAN NEWSREEL No.2	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sl/?	Kino/PFI FSU	Mar 1936
SCENES IN SOVIET RUSSIA	Mezhrabpom-Russ 35/sl/?	WIR	Aug 1924
SHADOWS OF THE MACHINE	— 35/sl/?	Atlas	Jan 1930

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
SHANGHAI DOCUMENT	Soyuzkino/Prometheus 16/35/sl/30	Atlas Kino/PFI	Feb 1930 Nov 1935
SON OF A SOLDIER	Soyuzfilm 16/sl/80	Kino	Nov 1934
SON OF MONGOLIA	Lenfilm 35/sd/70	PFI	Sep 1938
SOVIET 15th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS	— 16/sl/?	Kino	Apr 1934
SOVIET PARLIAMENT	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sd/10	Kino	Feb 1939
SOVIET SPORTS	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sd/15	Kino	Feb 1939
SOVIET SPORTS PARADE	Soyuzkinochronika 35/sd/?	PFI	Sep 1937
SOVIETS CONQUER THE STRATOSPHERE	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sl/15	Kino/FSU	Jan 1935
SPARTAKIADE	— 35/sl/?	Atlas	1930
STALIN'S REPORT	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sd/?	Kino/FSU	Apr 1937
STORM OVER ASIA	Mezhrabpom-Russ 9.5/16/35/sl/110	Atlas Kino/PFI	1930 Apr 1935
THE THIRTEEN	Mosfilm 35/sd/85	PFI	Aug 1938
TORN SHOES	Mezhrabpomfilm 16/sd/75	Kino	Mar 1937
TOURING THROUGH THE CAUCASUS	— 35/sd/?	Atlas	1931
TURKSIB	Vostok-Kino 16/35/sl/75	Atlas Kino	Apr 1930 Apr 1937
USSR ON THE SCREEN	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sd/30	Kino/PFI	Dec 1937
VOLGA	Intourist 16/35/sl/15	Kino/PFI	Apr 1936
VOROWSKY'S FUNERAL	Mezhrabpom-Russ 35/sl/5	WIR	Aug 1934
THE WAY TO PROSPERITY	Soyuzkinochronika 16/sl/30	Kino	Jan 1935

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
WORK AND PLAY IN THE USSR	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sd/10	Kino/PFI	1938
YOUTH	Soyuzkinochronika 16/35/sd/25	Kino/PFI	Apr 1937

C. Spanish Films

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
AIR BOMBING OF MADRID	— 16/35/sl/9	Kino/PFI	1937
ALQUEZAR	— 16/sd/15	Kino/PFI	1937
BARCELONA NEWSREEL	Laya Films 16/35/sd/10	Kino/PFI	Jan 1937
A CALL TO ARMS	CNT/FAI 16/sd/20	Kino	Mar 1937
THE HEALTH OF SPAIN	Film Popular 35/sd/15	PFI	Jul 1938
LAND WITHOUT BREAD	L. Bunuel 16/35/sd/30	Kino/PFI	Dec 1936
LATEST NEWS APRIL-JUNE 1938	Laya Films 35/sd/10	PFI	Jul 1938
MADRID 1936 (LOYAL SPAIN, TAKE ARMS!; NEW SPAIN)	SMPI/PCF 16/35/sd/35	ISF	Mar 1938
NEWS FROM SPAIN No.1	Laya Films 35/sd/13	PFI	1937
NEWS FROM SPAIN No.2	Laya Films 35/sd/10	PFI	1937
NEWS FROM SPAIN No.3	Laya Films 35/sd/10	PFI	1937
NEWS FROM SPAIN No.4	Laya Films 35/sd/10	PFI	1937
REFUGEES IN CATALONIA	Laya Films 16/sd/10	Kino/PFI NJCSR	1938

TITLE	PRODUCTION	DIST.	DATE
SPAIN TODAY	— 35/sd/10	PFI	Jan 1939
SPANISH GAZETTE	Laya Films 16/sd/?	ISF	Mar 1938
SUNSHINE IN SHADOW	Film Popular 16/35/sd/12	Kino/PFI	Jul 1938
THEY SHALL NOT PASS	SMPI 16/35/sd/32	ISF	Jun 1937
THE WAR IN SPAIN	— 16/sl/15	Kino	1938

D. Other Foreign Films

TITLE	PRODUCTION (COUNTRY)	DIST.	DATE
ABYSSINIA	Praesens (Ger/Switz) 35/sd/50	PFI	1936
BEYOND THE SUNSET	— (Canada) 16/sd/10	WFA	1939
THE BOMBING OF CANTON	CMPC (China) 35/sd/9	PFI	1938
BY SUNNY STREAMS	— (Czech) 35/sd/10	ISF	Mar 1938
CHILDREN MUST LAUGH	PJLM (Poland) 16/sd/60	WFA	1939
CHINA FIGHTS FOR FREEDOM	Frontier (USA) Films 16/sd/40	Kino	Dec 1937
CHINA STRIKES BACK	Frontier (USA) Films 16/35/sd/25	Kino/PFI WFA	Jan 1938
CHINESE SOVIET ARMY	?Frontier (USA) Films 16/sd/30	Kino	Oct 1937
CHINESE WAR SONG HITS No.2	CFEFC (China) 35/sd/10	PFI	Nov 1938

TITLE	PRODUCTION (COUNTRY)	DIST.	DATE
COME WITH US (OUT SCOUTS)	— (Czech) 16/35/sd/12	ISF	1938
CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1938 (PRELUDE TO CONQUEST)	March of Time (USA) 16/35/sd/15	Kino/ISF	Sep 1938
THE DAWN	Hibernia (Eire) 16/35/sd/80	Kino/ISF	Feb 1937
FACES OF FRANCE	P.Nizan (France) 16/sd/30	Kino	Jan 1938
FIGHT TO THE LAST	— (China) 16/sd/55	Kino	Oct 1938
THE FISHERMAN'S SONG	T.Chosheng (China) 16/35/sd/?	ISF	Jun 1937
FREE THAELMANN! (ERNST THAELMANN: FIGHTER AGAINST FASCISM)	RCVGF/ New York FPL (USA/Ger) 16/35/sl/20	Kino/PFI	Jul 1935
GARBAGE	— (France) 35/sl/?	Atlas	Nov 1929
HEY RUP!	Messner-Film (Czech) 16/35/sd/100	Kino/ISF	Feb 1937
INSIDE NAZI GERMANY	March of Time (USA) 16/sd/15	Kino	Mar 1939
INVASION OF SHANGHAI	Prometheus (Switz) 35/sl/?	?Atlas	1932
JUVENILE CRIME	March of Time (USA) 16/sd/10	Kino	Feb 1939
KAMERADSCHAFT	Nero-Films (Germany) 16/sd/80	Kino	Sep 1937
LAND OF PROMISE	Urim (Palest.) Palestine Film Co. 16/35/sd/50	ISF/WFA	1937
MILLIONS OF US	American (USA) Labor Films 16/35/sd/15	Kino/PFI	May 1937
NANKING CAPTURED	— (China) 16/sd/10,20	Kino	Apr 1938
NAZI CONQUEST No.1	March of Time (USA) 16/sd/10	Kino	Sep 1938
NEW SCHOOLS FOR OLD	March of Time (USA) 16/sd/10	Kino	Feb 1939

TITLE	PRODUCTION (COUNTRY)	DIST.	DATE
NEWS PARADE: GERMANY INVADES AUSTRIA	Castle Films (USA) 16/sl/10	FPL	Apr 1938
NEWS PARADE No.1: WAR IN CHINA	Castle Films (USA) 16/sl/10	FPL	Oct 1937
NEWS PARADE OF THE YEAR	Castle Films (USA) 16/sl/10	FPL	Jan 1938
SHADOW OF THE MINE (HUNGER IN WALDENBURG)	Prometheus (Germany) 16/35/sl/40	Atlas Kino/PFI	Feb 1930 Jan 1935
SKYSCRAPER SYMPHONY	— (USA) 35/sl/?	Atlas	Nov 1930
SOAPBUBBLES	Davis Film (Ger/Fr) 16/sd/45	Kino	Oct. 1937
SPANISH EARTH	Contemporary (USA) Historians 16/35/sd/50	Unity Films/ Kino/ISF	Dec 1937 Jul 1938
STAY IN STRIKES (STRIKES OF JUNE)	Ciné-Liberté (France) /CGT 16/sl/10	Kino	Nov 1937
STOP JAPAN	Garrison (USA) Films 16/35/sl/20	Kino/PFI	Sep 1938
STRADIVARIUS	— (France) 35/sd/?	PFI	1937
TENANTS RENT STRIKE	Frontier (USA) Films 16/35/sd/20	Kino/PFI	1938
THREAT TO GIBRALTAR	March of Time (USA) 35/sd/15	PFI	1938
LA VIE EST À NOUS	PCF (France) 35/sd/80	PFI	Apr 1937
WAR IN CHINA	March of Time (USA) 16/sd/10	Kino	Oct 1937
WAR IS HELL	Brescoe (Germany) 16/sd/75	Kino/ NACEC	Apr 1936
WATER AND WAVES	Prometheus (Germany) 35/sl/?	Atlas	1930
WESTFRONT 1918	Nero-Films (Germany) 16/sl/100	Kino	Feb 1937
WHEATLANDS	— (Canada) 16/sd/15	WFA	1939

TITLE	PRODUCTION: (COUNTRY)	DIST.	DATE
THE WORLD BELONGS TO US	— (Czech) 16/sd/90	ISF	1938
THE WORLD TODAY: THE BLACK LEGION	New York Kino (USA) 35/sd/12	PFI	Mar 1937
YOUTH WILL CHANGE THE WORLD	— (Czech) 16/sd/80	ISF	1937

Table XI. Summary of Labour Film Production 1929 - 1939

Atlas Films	6 (1)
Workers' Film and Photo League*	27 (3)
Kino**	22 (4)
Progressive Film Institute	18
Socialist Film Council	3
London Cooperative Society	9
Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society	3
Five London Cooperative Societies	2
Workers' Film Association	6
Others***	23
Total	<u>119 (8)</u>

Notes:

*Including the Film and Photo League.

**Including the Kino London Production Group and the British Film Unit.

***Refers to individuals and provincial groups such as Glasgow Kino and Manchester Film and Photo League.

1. Figures in parentheses refer to films which may have been made by these groups about which little information is available.
2. The figure for PFI includes 5 films made from footage of Spanish origin.

Table XII. Summary of Labour Film Distribution 1924 - 1939

	British	Soviet	Spanish	American	Others	Total
Atlas	6	22	-	1	4	33
Kino	68	56	8	13	12	157
WFPL	30	-	-	3	-	33
PFI	15	45	13	7	6	86
ISF	3	2	3	2	8	18
WFA	21	1	-	1	4	27
Others:	11	6	-	-	-	17
Total	127	91	18	20	28	284

*Note: These figures represent the minimum totals of films distributed by each group. Some distributors handled the same films. 'Other' distributors were not strictly distributors but Labour organisations which used films as part of their work and occasionally issued films which they had bought or made.

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	" : Walter Citrine	"
	" : William Ferrie	"
	" : Arthur Horner	"
	" : Harold Laski	"
HM	" : Herbert Morrison	"
	" : Ellen Wilkinson	"
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H. Films Viewed

Many of the Labour films listed below were either viewed at Metropolis Pictures or, at the time of viewing, were in the sole possession of Stanley Forman of Educational and Television Films Ltd. The Metropolis material has now been deposited in the National Film Archive, and copies of the ETV collection have been made by the NFA.

1. National Film Archive

(a) Films Used by the Labour Movement

Action Against the Means Test	1935
Advance Democracy	1938
Against Fascism	1934
Against Imperialist War; May Day 1932	1932
Anti-Fascist Demonstrations	1937
Battleship Potemkin	1925
Behind the Spanish Lines	1938
Bread	1934
The Busmen's Holiday	1937
Challenge to Fascism: Glasgow's May Day 1938	1938
Construction	1935
Coronation May Day	1937
CP 15th Congress	1938
Crime Against Madrid	1937

Daily Worker Film	1937
Defence of Madrid	1937
Dockworkers	1937
The End of St. Petersburg	1927
Free Thaelmann	1935
The General Line	1929
Glimpses of Modern Russia	1930
The Health of Spain	1938
Hell Unltd.	1936
ILP Summer School	1935
In the Land of the Soviets	1936
International Brigade	1938
Jubilee	1935
London, May 7 1933	1933
London Workers' Outing, Easter 1935	1935
Madrid Today	1937
March Against Starvation	1937
May Day 1935	1935
May Day 1937	1937
May the First 1937	1937
Modern Orphans of the Storm	1937
National Hunger March 1934	1934
News From Spain	1937
Passport to Europe	1938
Peace and Plenty	1939
Peace of Britain	1936
People Who Count	1937
People's Scrapbook, 1938	1939
Prisoners Prove Intervention in Spain	1938
Red, Right and Bloo	1937
Revolt of the Fishermen	1935
Rhondda Depression Years	1936
The Road to Hell	1933
Spanish ABC	1938
Spanish Earth	1937
Stop Fascism	1938
Storm Over Asia	1928
Strife	1937
Sussex 1939	1939
Turksib	1929

Voice of the People	1939
We Are the English	1936
What the Newsreel Does Not Show	1933
Winter	1936
Workers' Newsreel No.1	1934
Workers' Newsreel No.2	1934
Workers' Newsreel No.3	1935
Workers' Topical News No.1	1930
Workers' Topical News No.2	1930
Youth Peace Pilgrimage	1939

(b) Films Produced by or for the Conservative Party

John Bull's Hearth	1926-7
Red Tape Farm	1926-7
Socialist Car of State	1930
The Right Spirit	1931
Stanley Baldwin Election Speech	1931
The Great Recovery	1934
Britain Under the National Government	1935
Sam Small at Westminster	1935
Stanley Baldwin Election Speech	1935

(c) Other Documentary, Publicity and Propaganda Films

Britain Today	1936
Enough to Eat?	1936
The Health of the Nation	1937
Housing Progress	1938
Housing Problems	1935
Kensal House	1937
Kensington Calling	1935
Men in Danger	1939
New Worlds for Old	1938
Silver Lining	1935
Today and Tomorrow	1937
Today We Live	1937
Workers and Jobs	1935

(d) Newsreel Specials

Europe Today	(British Movietone News)	1934
The Great Crusade	(Pathe)	1935

2. Visnews Film Library

(a) Gaumont British News

<u>Issue No.</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Summary Title</u>
14	15/2/34	Turmoil in Europe
61	30/7/34	Study in Politics
126	14/3/35	MacDonald on Peace
128	21/3/35	Sir John Simon on Rearmament
193	4/11/35	General Election
194	7/11/35	General Election
298	5/11/36	Jarrow March
303	23/11/36	Baldwin on the Achievements of the National Government
349	3/5/37	London Bus Strike
357	31/5/37	Bus Strike Ends
440	17/3/38	Britain Rearms on Wartime Basis
484	18/8/38	Lansbury on Peace
497	3/10/38	Munich Agreement
501	17/10/38	London Rail Strike
517	12/12/38	International Brigade Returns
524	5/1/39	Unemployed Demonstration

(b) British Paramount News

18	30/4/31	Chamberlain on Snowden Budget
52	27/8/31	Cabinet Resigns
53	31/8/31	New Cabinet Policy
54	3/9/31	Henderson on New Government Policy
55	7/9/31	Baldwin on New Government Policy
65	12/10/31	General Election
66	15/10/31	General Election
67	19/10/31	General Election
68	22/10/31	General Election
124	5/5/32	May Day Demonstration
172	20/10/32	James Maxton on Unemployment
173	23/10/32	Hunger March
175	31/10/32	Hunger March Ends

230	11/5/33	May Day Rally
233	22/5/33	Lansbury Pleas for Peace
291	11/12/33	Dole Benefits Extended
295	25/12/33	James Maxton Interview
304	25/1/34	Hunger March
345	18/6/34	Government Cinema Vans
408	24/1/35	Miner's Leader Speaks
470	29/8/35	Lansbury Pleas for Peace
482	10/10/35	Lansbury Resigns
484	17/10/35	Miners' Stay-Down Strike
485	21/10/35	Miners' Strike
488	1/11/35	Anti-Nazi Demonstration
489	4/11/35	General Election
588	14/10/36	Anti-Fascist Rally
592	29/10/36	Fish Girls' Strike
593	2/11/36	Jarrow March
645	3/5/37	London Bus Strike
646	6/5/37	London Bus Strike
653	31/5/37	Bus Strike Ends
730	24/2/38	Europe and the Crisis
790	22/9/38	Europe's Fateful Hour
871	3/7/39	Tenants Rent Strike

3. British Movietone News Library

2	16/6/29	MacDonald and the Labour Cabinet
36	10/2/30	Baldwin Interview
44A	10/4/30	Arthur Greenwood on Housing
48	5/5/30	Labour Day Demonstration
51	26/5/30	Mosley Interview
82A	1/1/31	Mosley Interview
85A	22/1/31	India Round Table Conference
93	16/3/31	Churchill Interview
105A	11/6/31	MacDonald on Peace
109	6/7/31	MacDonald on Hoover Moratorium
110	13/7/31	Party Leaders at Albert Hall
116A	27/8/31	Emergency Cabinet Holds First Meeting
118	7/9/31	Baldwin, Samuel and MacDonald
120A	24/9/31	Britain Abandons Gold Standard
123	12/10/31	MacDonald Interview
123A	15/10/31	General Election

124	19/10/31	General Election
124A	22/10/31	General Election
125	26/10/31	General Election
126	2/11/31	Lansbury's New Job
141	15/2/32	Chamberlain on Tariffs
152A	5/5/32	May Day in Hyde Park
174	3/10/32	Snowden in Opposition
192A	9/2/33	Hyde Park Labour Protest
210A	15/6/33	MacDonald at Economic Conference
227A	12/10/33	Lord Lloyd on Air Defence
228A	19/10/33	Britain Shows Signs of Prosperity
245A	14/2/34	Runciman Interview
263	18/6/34	Government Talkie Vans
300A	7/3/35	Is There To Be An Armaments Race?
330A	3/10/35	Labour Party Conference
331	7/10/35	Chamberlain at Tory Conference
332A	17/10/35	Miners' Stay-Down Strike
333	21/10/35	End of Miners' Strike
334A	31/10/35	General Election
335	4/11/35	General Election
336	11/11/35	General Election
383	5/10/36	Conservative Party Conference
383A	8/10/36	Jarrow March
387	2/11/36	Jarrow March
390	23/11/36	Prime Minister on Democracy
402	15/2/37	Strike at Flint Factory
413	2/5/37	The Bus Strike
435A	7/10/37	Labour Party Conference
436	11/10/37	Conservative Party Conference
464A	28/4/38	The Budget
465A	5/5/38	May Day
487	3/10/38	Munich Agreement
501	9/1/39	Unemployed Demonstration

4. EMI/Pathe Film Library

31/5	15/1/31	Herbert Morrison's Building Scheme
31/69	27/8/31	Government Resigns
31/72	7/9/31	Baldwin on the Crisis
31/82	12/10/31	General Election

31/83	15/10/31	General Election
31/84	19/10/31	General Election
31/85	22/10/31	General Election
31/87	29/10/31	National Government Victory
33/38	11/5/33	Labour Demonstration
34/49	18/6/34	Government Cinema Vans
35/4	14/1/35	J.H.Thomas Interview
35/80	7/10/35	MacDonald on Peace
35/87	31/10/35	General Election
35/88	4/11/35	General Election
36/36	4/5/36	May Day
36/94	23/11/36	Baldwin Speaks to the Nation
38/80	6/10/38	The Man of the Hour - Neville Chamberlain

5. North West Film Archive

The Magic Basket	1930
Partners	1930
Round the Clock	1932
Women's Cooperative Guild Congress, Hull 1939	1939

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IV. UNPUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

A. Interviews

1. Transcripts of interviews in 1977 between Jonathan Lewis and Elizabeth Taylor Mead of Metropolis Pictures, and the following:
 - a) Edgar Anstey
 - b) George Elvin
 - c) Ivor Montagu
 - d) Gerald Sanger

These are in the possession of Jonathan Lewis.

2. Interview between Seona Robertson, of the North West Film Archive, Manchester Polytechnic, and Alf Williams. (Tape 566, 1978).

B. Typescripts

1. H.P.J.Marshall, 'My Basque Beret', a chapter from his forthcoming autobiography Young Blood Runs Red, in the possession of the present author.
2. L.Webb, 'Autobiography', in the possession of the Working Class Movement Library, Manchester.
3. D.Allen, 'Workers' Political Cinema in Scotland in the 1930's', (1977), in the possession of the present author.
4. V.Wegg-Prosser, 'Notes on the Films of the Film and Photo League', (1976), in the possession of the present author.
5. National Film Archive, Acquisition Files for the following:
 - a) Educational and Television Films Ltd. (1971-)
 - b) Progressive Film Institute (1951-)

C. Theses

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2. R.Campbell, Radical Cinema in the United States, 1930-1942: The Work of the Film and Photo League, NYKino and Frontier Films (PhD. Thesis, University of Michigan, 1976).
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4. T.J.Hollins, The Presentation of Politics. The Place of Party Publicity, Broadcasting and Film in British Politics, 1918-1939 (PhD. Thesis, University of Leeds, 1981).
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D. Interviews and Correspondence with the Author

Ralph Bond (Federation of Workers' Film Societies)
 Betty Bower (Kino Films)
 Lord Fenner Brockway (ILP Masses Stage and Film Guild)
 David Brotmacher (Workers' Film and Photo League)
 Isabel Brown (National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief)
 Christopher Brunel (Progressive Film Institute)
 Lord Ritchie Calder (National Joint Film Committee, Labour Party/TUC)
 Ted Candy (British Movietone News)
 Lord Citrine (TUC General Council)
 Thorold Dickinson (Progressive Film Institute)
 George Elvin (Association of Cinematograph Technicians)
 Ruth and Edmund Frow (Manchester Communist Party)
 Pat Holder (British Movietone News)
 Herbert Marshall (Progressive Film Institute)
 Bill Megarry (Progressive Film Institute)
 Eileen and Ivor Montagu (Progressive Film Institute)
 John O'Kelly (Gaumont British News)
 Gladys Reeves (Widow of Joseph Reeves, Workers' Film Association)
 Paul Rotha (National Joint Film Committee, Labour Party/TUC)
 Colin Siddons (Bradford Communist Party)
 Sir Vincent Tewson (TUC General Council)
 Ernie Trory (Brighton Communist Party)